

For social ownership of the banks and industry

SOLIDARITY

& WORKERS' LIBERTY



Devastation in Iran and Lebanon

1.2 million people in Lebanon forced from their homes

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Prepare for price rises and crisis worldwide

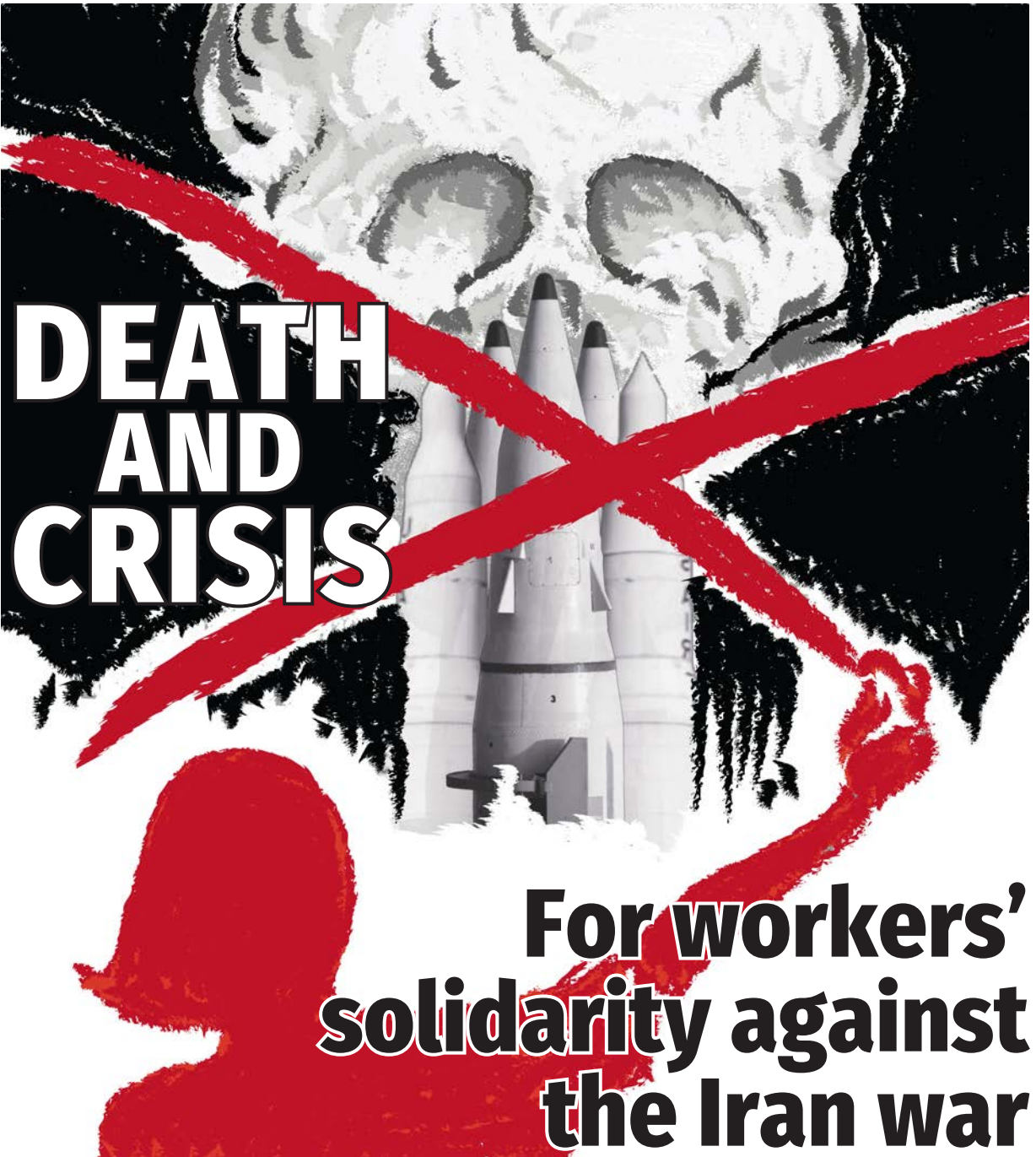
Working-class answers needed as war impacts spread

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No Kings protests in USA on 28 March

Left now organising for a strike on May Day

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**DEATH
AND
CRISIS**

**For workers'
solidarity against
the Iran war**

End the bombing! Israel out of Lebanon!

The US-Israeli bombing campaign has now run for four weeks and there is no sign that the regime change in Iran that the Israel government wants and Donald Trump sometimes threatens, or even claims has already taken place, is likely.

On Tuesday 24 March Trump, the buffoon, apparently unembarrassed by his own political stupidity, claimed, "[There has been] a change in the regime, because the leaders are all different," then adding that he didn't know who the new leaders are.

The Israeli military's assessment is that there are no significant signs of a split in the regime, or of regime collapse. They conclude the regime will probably outlast a bombing campaign.

It is true that the US and Israel have killed a significant number of Iran's top leaders, but they have been replaced by people with similar, or even more hard-line, policies. The basic structures of the clerical-fascist Iranian state remain intact. The mullahs' regime survives for now.

Trump has said he wants to end this war with a deal something like his arrangement with Delcy Rodriguez in Venezuela, but that is even more unlikely now. The US is now less clear about whom in the Iranian regime it can negotiate with, and less sure that whoever it does talk to can carry an agreement through.

In the last week Trump has variously said that the war will be over soon, that the war may go on for some time, that he will destroy Iran's energy infrastructure, that he will delay destroying Iran's infrastructure, that the Iranians are desperate to strike a deal. The Iranians have responded by saying they are not

negotiating.

Probably there are talks of some sort through Pakistan.

Iran continues to threaten to destroy tankers which attempt to pass through the narrow Strait of Hormuz, in an act which Trump apparently failed to predict. This hits petrol prices and production and distribution of fertiliser, nitrogen, liquefied natural gas (LNG), etc. As these shortages feed through, many countries will run short of food and electricity, and many industrial production areas, will be disrupted including medicine and micro-chip manufactures.

Meanwhile Trump is also moving additional troops and ships to the region in a possible attempt to take Iranian territory. 3,500 marines arrived in the area on Saturday 28 March. It is unclear if this is a whim, a bargaining strategy, or a serious threat of invasion. Perhaps Trump doesn't know either.

Territory

If Trump does seize Iranian territory, possibly islands in the Persian Gulf, or a strip of land along the Iranian coast, he will make his own forces vulnerable to missile and drone attacks and face the likelihood of Iran following through on threats to attack oil, gas and desalination sites in the Gulf states.

Desalination from a small number of plants provides 90% of the water supplies of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman. And 70% of Saudi Arabia's water. These states have very small amounts of water in storage.

A US ground incursion would extend and deepen the crisis. On 28 March the Houthis movement, based in northern Yemen, began to fire missiles at Israel. The Houthis say they will continue to attack until "Israel ceases its attacks and aggression". The Houthis have the ability to sink shipping in the Red Sea which would be a further serious blow to world trade.

The Houthis, one of the most reactionary forces on Earth, whose slogan is, "God is great, Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse on the Jews, Victory to Islam," are aligned with Iran, but not proxies. They may be using the opportunity of war to try to negotiate in-



Houthi missile launch 2025

Pic: Houthi Press Office



Tel Aviv anti-war protest

Pic: Standing Together/X

ternational recognition for the area of Yemen they control.

The killing of Iran's political and military leaders is also (or so serious mainstream journalists say) shifting power in Iran from the clerics towards the Islamic Guards (IRGC), the ideologically committed 180,000-strong force set up to protect the regime, but traditionally kept out of direct political administration.

Since Israel's 12-Day War in June last year, which humiliated Iran's leaders and destroyed its air defences, the Iranian state has decentralised IRGC military command structures. Units now operate from mosques and schools, not barracks.

Militia

The regime in Iran has put militia members on the streets of the capital, Tehran, and other cities, setting up checkpoints to intimidate the majority of Iranians who oppose the regime into fearful quiescence. The government has imposed an almost complete internet shutdown on Iran.

This war has now caused the deaths of at least 2,000 Iranians, injuring 25,000, as well as 100 deaths in Iraq, 19 dead and 5,500 injured in Israel, as well as dozens of deaths in the Gulf states.

The US has spent \$30-40bn on the war, now running at £500mn per day, with Israel spending \$300mn each day.

The OECD has revised its prediction for US inflation, up from 2.8% to 4% this year. The average 30-year fixed rate mortgage rose to 6.22% last week and petrol hit \$4 per gallon in the US, a 30% rise in the last month. Diesel has risen 50% in the last year and air fuel has doubled in price in the last three weeks which will impact on food costs.

In the UK average petrol prices stood at 150p per litre on 27 March, up 13% in one month. Diesel prices have increased 25% in the same period.

Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have introduced fuel rationing and mandated school closures. The Philippines and Thailand have restrictions on air-con use. Some petrol pumps have run dry in Australia. Egypt has instructed shops to close by 9pm and government offices to shut by 6pm to save energy.

Three opinion polls in the last week show disapproval with Trump at over 60% and approval at under 40%. The Democrats have taken 30 seats in state legislatures over the last year.

61% of the US public disapprove of Trump's Iran war. He was re-elected President on the explicit pledge to keep the US out of foreign wars and he is doing the opposite. Cracks are now emerging in Trump's Republican monolith as the November mid-term elections loom. The Republicans stand to lose control of the House of Representatives.

Israel has sent troops into southern Lebanon with the intention of creating an Israeli-controlled "buffer zone" between northern Israel and the militarised Shia party, Hezbollah. Hezbollah has been funded and armed by Iran and has repeatedly fired missiles into Israel to back Hamas and, during March, in support of Iran.

Israel has bombed large areas. 1.2 million people, or one-fifth of the Lebanese population have been forced from their homes, and 1,100 have been killed and 3,200 injured by Israeli military action so far.

Israel has demanded the Lebanese government disarms Hezbollah. The government may well want to do that, but in any case it can't. The invasion will further weaken the Lebanese state, impacted by a massive economic crisis in 2019, a gigantic explosion in Beirut's port area (2020), Covid, mass emigration, and two one-sided wars with Israel.

The Israeli invasion is unlikely to "work" even within a framework set by Israel's right-wing government. War will strengthen Hezbollah, at least in the medium term.

The Iran war continues to be backed by a majority of Israeli Jews (78% according to the *Times of Israel*, reporting a poll on 27 March) who fear that Iran may build nuclear weapons. Only 19% of the Palestinian Israelis who are one-fifth of the population support the war.

On 28 March protests again took place across Israel to oppose the Lebanon invasion, the Iran war and "ethnic cleansing of the West Bank and genocide in Gaza."

Back the workers and women activists of Iran.

Support the anti-war movements in Israel and the US.

Stop the bombing, down with the Islamic Republic, Israel out of Lebanon! □

UK Friends of Standing Together

Standing Together, Israel's fastest-growing grassroots movement over recent years, unites Jews and Palestinians within Israel to fight for an equal and just society, for peace, and against the occupation.

UKFoST promotes their work in the UK: for peace, justice, and equality for Israelis and Palestinians — Jews and Arabs — including an equal right to self-determination, and for the full equality of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

UKFoST promotes the benefits of joint struggle by Jews and Palestinians to this end. □ • ukfost.co.uk

• [@omdimbeyachaduk](https://twitter.com/omdimbeyachaduk)

Workers against war and the regime

From the International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran (a Canada-based group), 28 March

Four weeks have passed since the United States-Israel war against Iran began. In this short time, the human cost has been devastating. Large numbers of civilians have been killed, including children, and thousands of residential buildings and schools have been destroyed. The scale of the bombardment has led to widespread displacement and trauma.

Last week, Donald Trump recklessly threatened to “obliterate” Iran’s power plants if the Islamic Republic does not fully open the Strait of Hormuz, a move that would plunge millions of families into a humanitarian catastrophe.

At the same time, a total internet shutdown imposed by the Islamic Republic since February 28th, alongside intensified surveillance and repression, has made it extremely difficult to access reliable information from inside the country.

Under these conditions, most independent trade unions and labour organizations in Iran are unable to carry out even their most basic activities. Reports indicate that the immediate safety and survival of workers, labour activists, and their families have become the primary concern.

Despite these extreme conditions and the current forced silence, there is a long and well-documented history of clear and principled positions taken by independent labour organizations in Iran against war and militarism. Throughout many statements issued over the years – including during the 12-Day War of

June 2025 – these organizations have maintained a consistent and unwavering position. They oppose war, reject militarism, and firmly stand against foreign military intervention, including the criminal actions of the United States and Israel. At the same time, they oppose repression, authoritarianism, and anti-worker policies within Iran.

Independent labour organizations and workers’ groups in Iran maintain a strict independence from the state, employers and all political forces seeking to impose change from above. This commitment to autonomy necessitates a rejection of the current anti-worker capitalist regime as well as any “false alternatives” that seek to exploit the people’s suffering for geopolitical gain.

The labour movement categorically rejects and denounces any alignment with monarchist circles and Reza Pahlavi, who have openly advocated for U.S. and Israeli military strikes against Iran. From the perspective of organized workers’ movement, these pro-war positions represent a return to a past of dictatorship and dependency. This was evident during the national uprising of January 2026, where workers identified attempts by these reactionary groups to sabotage the movement by attempting to hijack its grassroots leadership and divert its demands away from social and economic justice.

For the Iranian working class, true liberation cannot be delivered by foreign bombardment or the restoration of deposed dynasties; it can only be realized through their own organized and independent power.

From the perspective of Iran’s labour

groups, workers and marginalized communities are always the primary victims of war. War brings death and displacement, but it also serves as a pretext for the government to silence dissent, expand surveillance, and justify arrests and austerity measures. This pattern is already unfolding today. For labour movements under constant pressure, war is another mechanism through which their voices are suppressed and their activities curtailed.

Furthermore, war diverts resources away from essential public needs and toward military and surveillance spending. Infrastructure is destroyed, inflation rises, and poverty deepens. Workers bear the burden of these crises while remaining excluded from the decisions that shape their lives.

The Iranian labour movement rejects the notion, perpetuated by pro-war groups, that this war serves the interests of ordinary Iranians. It strongly opposes foreign military intervention – including by the genocidal regimes of the United States and Israel – and rejects the despotic policies of the Islamic Republic.

The Iranian labour movement insists that working people must not be used as instruments or casualties in struggles for power driven by capitalist and imperialist interests. The violence carried out by the United States and Israel cannot be stopped by a government that oppresses its own people. It can only be challenged and stopped by organized working-class and anti-war movements, especially within the United States and across the West – movements capable of confronting

their own ruling classes and disrupting the machinery of war.

The message of independent trade unions and labour activists in Iran is unwavering: Workers are not expendable. By rejecting both external aggression and internal repression, they point toward a future based on peace, justice, freedom, equality, and self-determination – built from below through the collective power of the working class and all oppressed people.

For international workers’ movements and anti-war organizations, recognizing and amplifying these independent voices is a vital step in our shared struggle.

Our greatest strength lies in our mutual recognition and in an international solidarity that refuses to align with any state power, but instead links our struggles across borders in a common fight for a world free from war, exploitation, and all forms of oppression. □

Prisoners inside Iran at risk

From the Campaign to Free Political Prisoners in Iran

While the war involving Iran continues, the regime has intensified its repression both inside the country and beyond its borders. Even as civilians face the consequences of war, authorities are carrying out a widespread crackdown that includes digital blackouts, the shutdown of phone lines, threats against the public, arbitrary arrests, torture, executions and issuing new execution sentences.

Prisoners across Iran are now facing one of the most dangerous situations in recent years. Many have been deliberately kept in severely overcrowded prisons with inadequate access to food, clean water, and essential medical care. The majority of political prisoners are denied contact with their families. Reports indicate that hundreds of political prisoners have recently been transferred to unknown locations.

At the same time, state media has openly threatened the public. Officials have warned that if citizens take to the streets to protest, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) will respond with lethal force.

The regime has also expanded its repression beyond Iran’s borders. Recently, the Prosecutor General’s Office announced that Iranians living abroad who “cooperate with enemy states” could face severe legal penalties, including confiscation of property and even the death penalty. □

Prepare for price rises and crisis

By Martin Thomas

The Iran war is already raising fossil-fuel prices, and looks almost certain to raise them more.

The prospects are of another energy price spike, as in 2022 after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The labour movement needs plans to respond. We think what we wrote in 2022 still applies.

A worker revolt, seeking wage and benefit rises, and increased funding for public services, to match price rises, is more effective than a consumer revolt petitioning the government to control prices.

There will be calls for the government to subsidise fossil-fuel prices (relative to other prices, which include prices of energy-efficiency measures and of renewables investment), as the Tories did in 2022. But such subsidies are inefficient and have great ecological downsides.

A makeshift “safety net” softening of an energy price shock is better provided by a quota of free energy per house-

hold, which could be done by a drastic extension of the current Warm Homes Discount. It would not incentivise additional fossil-fuel consumption by the better-off; and it would not subsidise energy profiteers by allowing them to get higher revenues at the expense of the public purse.

Behind household-energy price rises will be a rise in world-market gas prices. That yields a rise in “economic rents” (super-profits) for energy suppliers with cheaper costs because not reliant on gas imports (renewables, nuclear, etc.)

Public ownership of the whole energy industry, not just of sections of it, would enable those “economic rent” incomes to be redirected to social and green purposes.

The economic repercussions of the war have already gone further in many countries, with fuel becoming scarce, not just expensive, and serious threats to food supplies now and for some time to come.

Already the capitalist world was run-

ning on a cliff-edge, with any one of three “bubbles” – AI, cryptocurrency, and private-credit financing – at risk of bursting. The “war shock” could burst one or more of those.

And if it does, the frictions and blockages installed by Trump’s tariff wars will sharpen the impact and lengthen the recession.

At that point, all bourgeois governments, in one way or another, are likely to turn to social cuts and wage-repression. Unemployment, already creeping upwards in Britain, will soar.

Partial measures like wealth tax and equalisation of capital gains tax with income tax will still help even then. But within narrow limits.

The working-class answer will need to be: take the banks, all the utilities, and the big corporations into public ownership, under democratic control, and redirect resources to maintain basic services. Cut the working week to create useful jobs for all at union rates of pay. □



Make unions take lead against far right!

By Cathy Nugent

Very many thousands of people turned out to the streets on 28 March to join the Together Alliance protest against the rise of the far right in the UK. It was a tremendously hopeful show of solidarity, one which every socialist, trade unionist and community activist can take confidence from and build on in their local area.

Workers' Liberty members marched alongside work-mates and other union members in the trade union bloc or in other blocs such as Friends of Standing Together. We sold publications including our new pamphlet *How to Beat the Racists*, bit.ly/htbtr which went down well.

The march was not just a gathering of seasoned leftists — it was young, vibrant and with many homemade placards on display. But there were some problems. And we need to carefully consider where we go from here.

As in the past, Saturday's demonstration was not properly stewarded. Stewards were organised to sell merchandise and to control the pace of the demonstration by stopping it behind street-wide Stand Up to Racism (SUTR) banners; they did not seem to be there to look after the participants. Yet on a demonstration this size that is what you need.

Stewards did not, for example, disperse a dangerous crush of people on the Park Lane pavement, which resulted in a few low-level medical emergencies.

There was a serious political problem on the march as well. The Palestine solidarity feeder march had many people flying Iranian flags. No doubt people with flags thought they were in solidarity with Iranians being killed by US and Israeli military strikes. But this flag, unlike the Palestinian flag, is not symbolic of a national liberation struggle. It is the flag of a clerical fascist regime.

Many trade union general secretaries had promised in advance a big push to get their members onto the streets. Comrades estimate around ten thousand people joined the trade



union blocs to march behind local and national banners. That was a better turn-out from the unions than on recent SUTR marches, but a small part of the whole demonstration, less than it could have been, and a long way from what is needed. We need a mass mobilisation from the unions against the far right. There is a danger now that the union leaders will tell themselves "big march, job done". It really isn't.

Mobilise

The far right — Reform and the fascist fragments — continue to build and mobilise. Reform have slightly dipped in the polls but there is no sign that their bid to replace the Tories as the "mainstream" party of the right is waning. On 4 April local Fly the Flag far-right people will march in Sheffield. On 18 April Britain First will attempt to march again through Manchester (after being stopped by an anti-fascist mobilisation in February).

On 16 May Tommy Robinson will attempt to repeat the Unite the Kingdom mobilisation of 13 September 2025 which drew 150,000 people or more.

These threats need to be countered by consistent agitation, face-to-face discussions, organising in our workplaces and communities and serious counter-mobilisations. Stand Up to Racism

and the Together Alliance have not done that so far. Nor, in fact, can they hope to do it on their own. We need to make our unions, with over six million members, take on the load of doing this work.

On 16 May the annual Nakba Day demonstration is planned by Stop the War (STW) and others. Tommy Robinson has planned the Unite the Kingdom rally to clash — and the police have given permission for the far right to descend on Whitehall once again. So far we've only seen "Save the Date" messaging from SUTR for 16 May. It seems likely that SUTR or the Together Alliance will organise a demonstration on the day, perhaps backing an expanded Nakba Day.

An anti-far-right demonstration submerged into Palestinian solidarity would not be what we need. While Palestinian solidarity is worthy in its own right, we need much bigger numbers and a much broader appeal than can be mobilised with that focus.

TUFF

The Trade Unions Fighting the Far Right (TUFF) network has organised an open letter calling on the TUC to take the lead on organising a counter demonstration with properly organised stewarding. We must keep up the pressure on our unions to organise for that.

We also urgently need the Together Alliance to set up democratic public discussions on where the UK movement against the far right goes from here.

The time is right to do that. More and more people on the left, including some in and around the SWP, now recognise that we need a mass trade-union response to the far right. What do we need to do?

- Build existing labour movement initiatives; share materials for organising and leafleting in local areas and workplaces.

- Build labour movement oriented national initiatives such as TUFF.

- Set up of local committees/networks involving all left activists, trade union-

ists and community activists to oppose the far right, fight the cuts and defend migrants.

- Get Labour Party, Your Party and Green Party members together to help with these initiatives.

- Push for SUTR and the Together Alliance to open up to democratic decision-making (by making speeches and talking to people face-to-face).

- Develop specific strategies to fight back in Reform-led councils.

- Encourage face-to-face political discussion. Our campaigns should understand the arguments around a range of issues raised by the far right, i.e. trans rights and climate change as well as anti-racism

- Combat Reform on campuses as students and Uni workers.

Push in our unions:

- for resources to organise community leafleting and workplace talking campaigns on a regional and local basis;

- to organise counter-demonstrations wherever and whenever they are needed;

- to identify collective demands that both benefit workers and cut against the far right, including anti-racist, pro-trans and climate demands;

- to run unionisation drives aimed at migrant workers. □

Don't put an "abolish Israel" dress-up on anti-racism

By a marcher

The 28 March demonstration was big, and good in many ways. But in the section where I was (I don't know how widespread this was) the march was dominated by chants of "from the river to the sea..."

which, like it not, means obliterating Israel. The Brighton Unite branch marched behind a banner proclaiming "Against racism, fascism and Zionism". My attempts to argue with them didn't go well. If I objected to this identification of all strands of Zionism with

racism and fascism, I must be a supporter of genocide!

And then from the platform I got a lesson in how not to fight the right. Liberals and other non-working class politicians, celebrities...

Pledging to stand with migrants and black people, trans

people against the far right is all good as far as it goes, but says nothing to working-class and poor people who are being attracted by the right.

Sharon Graham's speech was the best of only a couple I heard that talked about wage stagnation, housing, services,

inequality.

Zarah Sultana listed lots of groups attacked by the far right over the years, but I didn't hear her mention Jews. Then she lead a chant of, "from the river to the sea..."

We will need to do much better than this. □

Workers' united fronts? Or just fronts?

By Matt Cooper

The Socialist Workers Party was a driving force in organising the Together demonstration on 28 March. What does it say about what to do next, after the demonstration? The answer can be found in the issue of *Socialist Worker* (#2998) sold on the march.

The editorial proclaims that "Only organisation can confront fascism." But what kind of organisation? United fronts of working-class organisations, rooted in trade unions and working-class communities? A strategy to transform unions into combative, rank-and-file-controlled bodies? The question is effectively answered with "join the SWP."

Further into the paper, a little substance appears. Lewis Nielsen and Samira Ali (both presented as Stand Up To Racism [SutR] officers, but also SWP Central Committee members) describe Together as a coalition spanning "the Palestine solidarity movement and the Green Party to the trade unions, charities and NGOs." These networks, we are told, are "the ingredients for a dynamic mass movement."

This mass movement, they insist, cannot be reduced to "platitudes from politicians and celebrities." Yet the demonstration itself was built precisely around such a coalition, under the platitudinous slogan "Love, Hope and Unity." The movement they propose is essentially a slightly refreshed SutR, with activity such as a protest against Tommy Robinson on 16 May, which they suggest will improve on previous mobilisations because "anti-racist networks"



have been built through organising the Together march. We will see.

A further article, by the pseudonymous "Frankie Murden," attempts to provide theoretical justification. The article sketches the history of the [united and popular fronts](#) in the 1920s and 1930s, but its application to the present reveals the weaknesses of the SWP's politics.

As anyone avowing any allegiance to the tradition of Leon Trotsky and his comrades would, the SWP wants a working-class united front, not a popular front. But it says SutR is that united front.

It defines a popular front as one where "the left subordinate its politics to the centre," and a united front as "unity in action" with political independence for the left. SutR is a united front because the SWP can sell its paper and recruit within its activities.

A lot is missing there. For a start, class. Historically, the united front, as advanced by the Communist Interna-

tional in the early 1920s, was about unity in action between working-class organisations to advance working-class interests. The popular front, by contrast, involved alliances with liberal or bourgeois forces.

For *Socialist Worker* now, the dividing line is not class but slogans. The key test becomes whether participants agree that Reform UK is racist and that "refugees are welcome here." But these are positions shared by decent liberals as well as socialists. In effect, the SWP defines the united front as something that can be shaped by political accommodation to liberal platitudes so long as the liberals accept a few radical-sounding but ultimately liberal slogans.

In fact, SutR has functioned as a mechanism for getting trade union resources for SWP-shaped campaigning in return for keeping that campaigning bland and often tokenistic. It has operated as a substitute for a trade-union-based political force capable of countering the far right, not a step to-

wards that. It allows trade union bureaucracies to outsource "anti-racist work" to SutR.

Mobilising union members directly could be part of rebuilding and transforming the unions themselves. The SWP's "united front" does not have that dynamic and transformative element. Instead it is more like a bureaucratic stitch-up.

At best it is a distorted version of the united front. It mobilises union support (mostly funding) and depends on union resources but leaves the bureaucracy largely untouched. It also leaves the Labour Party outside the equation, despite its links to the unions and its place within the labour movement. The SWP (and implicitly SutR) see the anti-Reform vote as a Green one, even where Labour is best placed to defeat Reform. The idea of building a movement in the unions to push Labour to take on Reform is alien to their conception of the united front. Thus, what emerges instead is closer to a liberal popular front of those more liberal on immigration than the current Labour government.

Studying the united front as formulated in the early 1920s and, in the 1930s by Trotsky, for Germany, France, etc., does not provide ready-made answers for today. But it does establish the centrality of united working-class action. After the Together march, the SWP offers no clear strategy, only the hope that it will revive SutR. The task of building a working-class movement capable of defeating the right will have to be pursued without expecting much help from the SWP. □

Far right

Fascists set up fight clubs

By Kayden Jones

Hope not Hate's State of Hate report 2026 detailed the rise of the Active Club (AC) Network, which is "a series of fascist fight clubs which have established regional chapters across England and Scotland". These clubs "in their own words are training their members for race war" and combine "hand-to-hand combat training with extremist ideology in order to foster a militant fascist elite". They date back to 2020 in the USA, migrating to the UK in 2023 with branches across the country.

A European Commission report on The Role of Sports in Violent Right-Wing Extremist Radicalisation details that

physical exercise can be exploited by extremists as a space for recognition, brotherhood, destructive notions of masculinity, and identity formation.

- To recruit new members these groups use merchandise, networking events, and tailor training to propagate extremist narratives.

- ACs create an innocuous space for radicalisation. An ITV report last year described the groups strategy as "spreading hate with a wink". One AC member wrote on WhatsApp, "The solution is to not do anything illegal within your activism." The investigation described how members secretly performed Nazi salutes while keeping their propaganda

covert.

- AC members frequently fail at this "stealth fascism", with some engaging in terrorism. According to Hope Not Hate, individuals involved in AC Scotland have "served jail time for making bomb and death threats against left-wing activists. Additionally, in 2025 police found a gun at the home of the neo-Nazi drug dealer Joseph Beaver, a member of AC Scotland."

- Politically the AC's primary threat is their impact on the broader far-right. Hope Not Hate describes their "non-partisan approach and have recruited across the British fascist scene... The ACs have in turn influenced the activism and aesthetics of the wider ex-



Credit: Hope not Hate

Active Club Scotland members in Stirling

treme right, and combat training is now commonplace in PA [Patriotic Alternative], Homeland, BM [British Movement] and more." AC members have organised and attended anti-migrant protests across the country. AC Midlands provided

security for Patriotic Alternative's October 2025 conference in Leicestershire. This demonstrates a clear path of development in which ACs act as violent "stewards" for far right events, increasing their physical threat. □

The Morning Star has learned something

By Jim Denham

The antisemitic attack on four ambulances run by the Jewish charity Hatzola in north London, was roundly and unreservedly condemned by the *Morning Star*. The paper's editorial immediately following the attack made a point of denouncing "the twisted logic" that holds Jewish people responsible for the actions of Israel.

Surely we should expect nothing less from the paper of "Peace and Socialism"?

Unfortunately, that is not always the case.

In June 2018 the paper carried an article headed "Rising anti-semitism cannot be tackled without addressing Israel's crimes." The article claimed "mainstream Jewish communities everywhere ... appear unwilling to accept the connection between developing international anti-semitism (or anti-Israel sentiment) and Israel's decades long ... acts of barbarism."

Two leading members of the Communist Party (which controls the MS), Mary Davis and Phil Katz, immediately protested, writing in response: "This is col-

lective guilt whatever way one comes at it. We argue forcefully as a paper, that British Muslims should not be stigmatised for the actions of Saudi rulers, or Isis. But when it comes to Jews, other standards apply..."

A statement subsequently appeared on the *Morning Star* website stating that the article "crossed a line in attributing anti-semitism to the policies of the Israeli government and made demands on the 'Jewish diaspora' and 'Jewish community' as is these were responsible for Israeli policy or obliged to account for it."

It is worth recalling that row because although the paper has continued to publish articles that downplay anti-semitism and, during Corbyn's leadership of Labour, dismissed allegations of antisemitism as the work of "British and Israeli state actors", the paper has never again tried to argue quite so crudely that Israel and "Zionist" Jews are to blame for antisemitism.

But, sadly, that has been the reaction of a large number of people claiming to be left wing, commenting on social media following the north London arson attack. Other widely shared responses

have included the claim that it was a "false flag" operation by the Israelis and even that it was an "insurance job" by Hatzola itself.

An article in *Socialist Worker* by Tomáš Tengely-Evans (25 March: "Stand against north London antisemitic attack, don't let the right exploit it") starts off with a condemnation of the attack as "a horrific reminder that antisemitism is on the rise" before going on to denounce any suggestion that the Iranian state might be involved, to attack the (Jewish) Community Security Trust on the grounds that "its leaders support Israel and slur Palestinians", and to insist that "anti-Zionism — wanting the destruction of the Israeli settler colony — is not antisemitism."

The article even suggests that the false flag conspiracy theory being put about in the wake of the attack "takes a kernel of truth" and goes on to back the idea that Netanyahu "was able to draw Trump into the attack on Iran."

The same article confidently states that antisemitism "is a far right ideology and driven by forces such as the Trump movement in the United States" (it cannot possibly exist on the left, then).

Meanwhile, "Jewish Voice for Liberation" (formerly Jewish Voice for Labour, an organisation that seems to exist mainly to downplay antisemitism on the left and in general) posted a piece by one M J Rosenberg, an American writer whose argument, says the JVL Introduction "applies equally to Britain".

The article, headed "Israel is responsible for anti-Jewish attacks here" claims that Jewish organisations and rabbis have always claimed that Israel speaks and acts for Jews in general: "You cannot spend decades insisting that Israel represents all Jews and then be surprised when others, including dangerous and hateful people, take that claim at face value."

An argument that is remarkably similar to that of the 2018 article that the MS felt obliged to withdraw and apologise for.

The MS, for all its weakness on the question of antisemitism, has at least learned that blaming Jews (or at least "Zionists" — i.e. that majority of Jews who do not seek "the destruction of the Israeli settler colony") for antisemitism, is inevitably... antisemitic. □

Hate-crime

Antisemitic incidents and attacks have doubled

By Dale Street

Published on 11 February, the Community Security Trust's "Antisemitic Incidents Report 2025" records 3,700 instances of anti-Jewish hate in the UK in 2025. This is the second-highest level ever recorded — only 2023 was worse — and double the rate for 2021-2.

The worst of such incidents — such as the murder of Melvin Kravitz at Heaton Park Synagogue or the 23 March arson attack on the Hatzola ambulances in north London — make the headlines.

But there are many more: physical attacks on individuals; desecration of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries; damage to the homes and vehicles of Jewish people; destruction of public chanukiah; vandalism of Jewish-owned businesses, Jewish schools and the premises of Jewish organisations; verbal threats and abuse; and the circulation of hard-copy and online material espousing Jew-hatred (including support for the Holocaust) and conspiracy theories.

"Everyday hate" such as

abuse and attacks on Jewish schoolchildren on their way to and from school, on congregants going to and from synagogues, and on Jews visiting Jewish businesses and venues, does not make the headlines.

The report shows that acts of Jew-hatred breed more Jew-hatred.

The Heaton Park Synagogue murder, for example, was followed by "an immediate spike in antisemitic incidents, an increase of 183% (compared with the previous week)... Violent attacks on Jews sometime generate more anti-Jewish invective from antisemites who feel emboldened to express their prejudice."

This upsurge is not confined to Britain, as evidenced by the Washington Capital Jewish Museum murders last May, the Bondi Beach murders in December, and the attempted mass murder at the Michigan Temple Israel on 12 March.

In a single week in mid-March synagogues were attacked in Holland, Belgium, Norway, Canada and America.

The rate for hate crimes

against Jews in Britain is currently 106 per 10,000. For Muslims, the rate is 12 per 10,000. The hate crimes against Muslims reflect huge reserves of prejudice, and go together with documented job discrimination. But the figures underline the impact of Jew-hatred on everyday Jewish life.

Yet broad sections of the left seem reluctant, or even worse, to confront the problem. The Together Alliance/ Stand Up to Racism flyer publicising anti-racist demonstrations currently being held across Scotland, for example, does not even mention antisemitism

Zionism

And flyers distributed on the demonstrations claim: "In many ways, Zionism is worse than modern-day Nazism and fascism. ... Israel has evolved to match Nazi Germany in the ferocity of its state-enforced racism, and surpass it in levels of popular racism."

Jew-hatred has taken different forms in different historical epochs. In the Middle Ages it was religious in form (Jews as Christ-killers). In the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was racist (Jews were a distinct, and pernicious, race). Today a dominant strand is antizionism.

Antizionism is something of a different order from any of the many different critiques of historical Zionism or contemporary Israeli-Jewish nationalism. Rather, it incorporates the tropes of classical racist antisemitism into a positive worldview defined by hostility to a fantasy political behemoth labelled "Zionism".

Zionists are rich and wealthy, they own the media and political parties, they plunge countries into war, they are cold-hearted, arrogant and immoral, they make false accusations of antisemitism, they are worse than the Nazis, etc. — Zionism is the enemy of all humanity.

A political generation ago, such antizionism was primarily the product of Stalinist Jew-hatred, especially its explosion following the Six Day War of 1967. Today, it draws from postcolonialist and decolonialist theories.

In her book addressing the

question of why so many on the left praised the Hamas atrocity of 7 October 2023, for example, Eva Illouz proceeds from French Theory through Critical Theory to decolonialism: "Decolonialism thus produces a 'transcendental antizionism' which ascribes an immeasurable power to Israel and extends to all Jews throughout the world." Stalinism gets only a single passing mention.

At the end of the nineteenth century many socialists saw antisemitism as objectively progressive. According to the German socialist August Bebel in 1893, antisemitism had "a contradictory reactionary-revolutionary nature. ... Against its will but of necessity it must become revolutionary, and thereby plays into our hands, the hands of social democracy."

The same mistake should not be made with antizionism. It is not a misplaced form of anti-imperialism or a wayward expression of solidarity with Palestinians. It is the dominant contemporary form of Jew-hatred, and should be combatted as such. □

Anti-war protesters defy the police

By Ira Berkovic

Thousands of people took part in anti-war protests throughout Israel on Saturday 28 March. Many protests face violent repression from the police, especially in Habima Square, Tel Aviv, where the entire demonstration was dispersed. 22 people were arrested, of which 13 were in Tel Aviv.

Israeli socialist and peace activist Adam Keller writes: "[The police] forcibly dispersed approximately one thousand protesters, claiming they were violating Home Front Command directives. Officers slammed protesters to the ground and confiscated signs. 13 protesters were arrested after the [police commander] ordered his officers to 'start making arrests.' A few fascists also arrived at the scene and confronted the protesters."

The binational (Palestinian-Jewish) social movement Standing Together wrote: "Last night [Saturday 28 March], thousands of people in Israel took to the streets in protests across the country which we coordinated with a coalition of civil society groups in a call to end our government's forever war in Iran, Lebanon, Gaza, and its deepening occupation in the West Bank. At the main protest in Tel Aviv, Ben-Gvir's police entered to violently and forcefully disperse over 1,000 participants, injuring some of our movement leaders and arresting several activists."

Bloodshed

"While the police claimed that the protest violated safety guidelines during the war, the demonstration was held at Habima Square, above one of the largest public shelters in Tel Aviv. Our extremist government sees the opposition to forever war getting stronger from week to week and is trying to silence us — but we're continuing to grow. We will not stop until we end this forever cycle



Anti-war protest in Jerusalem

Pic: Standing Together/X

of bloodshed."

Around 1,200 people have been killed in Lebanon since 2 March, with more than one million people displaced, leading to a renewed humanitarian crisis. In recent days, Netanyahu has ordered the expansion of the "security belt", with Israeli troops pushing deeper into Lebanon. Israel has established numerous military bases in southern Lebanon, whilst pursuing highly-destructive bombing tactics against infrastructure targets, raising fears that large swathes of Lebanon may, like Gaza, be reduced to a wasteland. If Israel expands its occupation in Lebanon, the displacement crises will worsen, as displaced Lebanese will be unable to return to whatever of their former communities remain intact.

Destroy

The nominal reason for the Israeli offensive is to "destroy" Hezbollah, the Shia Islamist paramilitary party linked to Iran. But this, like the ambition to "destroy" Hamas in Gaza, is impossible as a military aim. Such parties will only be marginalised and eventually overcome when strong alternatives to them are able to develop within Lebanese, and Gazan, society. The wanton destruction

caused by Israeli military action makes such developments far less likely, not more.

For the "Greater Israel" expansionists in Netanyahu's cabinet, the wars serve to project Israeli power throughout the region, and conquer new territory. Contrary to the claims of some on the Israeli right, the wars do not make Jewish Israelis more safe. 19 people have been killed in Israel since the start of the latest round of conflict, with many more injured.

In Gaza, increases in food prices caused by the Iran war have raised fears of renewed famine. Essential healthcare provisions remain in short supply. Nearly 700 people have been killed since the so-called ceasefire came into effect.

Occupation

Israel continues to deepen its occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Standing Together wrote: "Yesterday [Friday 27 March], 11 Palestinian families were forced out of their homes in Silwan in East Jerusalem as part of a campaign to change the area's demographics in favour of Israeli Jews. While Palestinians can barely obtain permits to build new homes, demolitions and evictions push them out of the homes they have."

"Right now, with our extremist government waging war on several fronts, Silwan is facing more and more forced evictions. While headlines focus on Iran, we should also pay attention to the ongoing displacement of hundreds of families — no one deserves to be driven from their home by force or to live in fear of being homeless. This reality of ethnic cleansing can't continue."

Rampages by armed settlers, either

ignored or abetted by military and security forces, continue. On 22 and 23 March, 14 Palestinian towns and villages were attacked in a wave of settler violence. Attacks included arson attacks, beatings, and blocking roads to prevent people leaving and ambulances arriving. Occupation forces did not intervene, allowing the attacks to continue unchecked.

A general election is due in Israel in the autumn of 2026. The prospect of early elections appears to have been staved off, as the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) succeeded in passing a national budget for 2026. Failure to do so would have meant a collapse of the government, and early elections.

Budget

The budget includes an increase of 32 billion shekels, around £7.65 billion, in defence spending. The cost of the current war is estimated at around £1.21 billion per week. The passing of the budget was preceded by a 3% across-the-board cut to all government ministries, except defence. Yair Golan, leader of the centre-left Democrats, said the funding in the budget to support settlements in the occupied West Bank "exceeded those given to communities inside the Green Line", i.e., pre-1967 Israel.

The budget also includes considerably increased resources for Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) institutions. Haredi parties had indicated they would not support the budget without guarantees that the 2024 High Court ruling overturning the exemption from military service for Haredi men would be revoked. They agreed to back the budget after securing increased funding, but are continuing to demand that the military service exemption is formally restored.

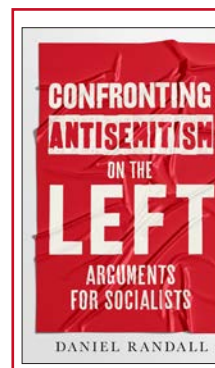
Much of the criticism of the budget from the official opposition in the Knesset focused on this aspect. As Alon-Lee Green, national co-director of Standing Together, has commented previously: "Unfortunately, most of the political system in Israel — the Jewish part of the political system — is talking about recruiting Haredi people to the army, as if we need more soldiers and not fewer wars." □

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Job losses are not due to “net zero”

By Owen Flood

In the past two years oil refineries, car manufacturing, and steel manufacturing have seen headline closures: Grangemouth (closed 2025) and Lindsey (closed 2025) oil refineries, Vauxhall Luton (closed 2024) and Port Talbot (scaled down 2024).

Reform and the Conservatives regularly use these examples to campaign against net zero policy as part of a wider reactionary world-view on the far-right. Reform said at the time that if net-zero policies were scrapped it could have saved the Grangemouth refinery and the 400 jobs lost there.

Domestically, the UK has steadily decarbonised over the last decade and a growing part of its energy mix is from renewables, particularly offshore wind. Yet while the UK “leads” at home, it is among the top five countries for finance to oil and gas projects across the world.

Unions that represent workers in oil and gas industries, despite having policy calling for just transition and supporting environmentally progressive policies, consistently come out in favour of environmentally damaging decisions. Unite at its policy conference last year voted to campaign for the ban on new diesel and petrol cars to start in 2035 rather than 2030 and for more investment and expansion of the oil refinery industry.

The “jobs” argument seems intuitive. If investment in polluting industries is discouraged, they will move to places without those restrictions. It’s not so simple.

In the 1970s there were 18 oil refineries in Britain. This are now four. The last major oil refinery shutdowns were Teesside in 2009, Coryton in 2012, and Milford Haven in 2014.

Over-Capacity

With those closures, the UK lost a quarter of its oil refining capacity. The context was overcapacity in European oil refining and extremely low oil prices. The company operating Milford Haven closed after claiming it was operating at a loss; Coryton, due to falling European demand for petroleum products and tightening profit margins; Teesside, the global financial crisis of 2008-9. No buyer could be found for any. Nationalisation to stop closure and save jobs (maybe by converting the technology) was never considered.

No-one mentioned the 2008 Climate Change Act, which committed the UK to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050, as a factor.

Grangemouth refinery officially closed last year in April. Petroineos, the company operating the refinery, claimed it had been running at a loss since 2011 because of technological issues. It also



cited falling demand for fossil fuels in the UK – decreased demand for fossil-fuel burning vehicles, increasing production of electric vehicles, competition with other fossil-fuel producing countries.

Unite, the union representing workers at the refinery, said that the company had been aware of the technological issues and they could be rectified; Grangemouth was being converted to a fuel import hub because it would be cheaper and more lucrative for the company.

But the union has also agreed with the

company that the closure of Grangemouth was due to net-zero policies.

Petroineos never properly opened the books on their losses. Most job losses in oil and gas in the UK have come from a combination of downsizing, mergers, and companies seeking better profit margins elsewhere, and at times when hundreds of new oil and gas licenses were handed out by the previous Conservative government. Net zero policies might play some role, but even scrapping them completely would have done little to save the thousands of jobs lost in the sector since 2014.

Jobless Transition

More recently Unite has come out against the Labour government's ban on new North Sea oil and gas projects, saying that doing so will lead to a “jobless transition” in the oil and gas sector. The focus on blaming decarbonisation and the ban is a distraction. Much bigger damage has been done by companies finding it more profitable to cut jobs to make savings, shut down operations, and to do business elsewhere.

It also distracts from the main immediate demand in this context: for the government to take the whole energy industry under public ownership and democratic control, to save jobs on the basis of worker-led just transition to more sustainable technologies. □

The fourth worst among 38 OECD countries

By Harold Storey

Workers who are made unemployed and claim benefits in the UK can, if they are homeowners, expect their income to drop to an average of only 12% of what it was previously. Slightly more is given to some people depending on circumstances such as disability, but the “safety net” for the unemployed has huge holes. In general, the “replacement rate” for income is the fourth lowest among the 38 richer (OECD) countries.

Driving-down

The driving-down started with Thatcher in 1979, and was accelerated by the Tories after 2010. An obvious intended effect is to force people to get back into work, any work, however low-paid, as quickly as possible after losing a job. But

it doesn't create those alternative jobs, even low-paid ones.

The UK unemployment rate is currently relatively low by post-1975 standards. At around 5%, it is lower than the 8.5% rate in 2011, and 10.5% rate in 1992. Nonetheless, it is still on a steady rise since 3.6% in 2022.

Slump

This steady rise could become a sudden jump if the Iran war sets off a global slump, which it could well do. The UK's welfare system would be exposed as ineffective, or indeed punitive.

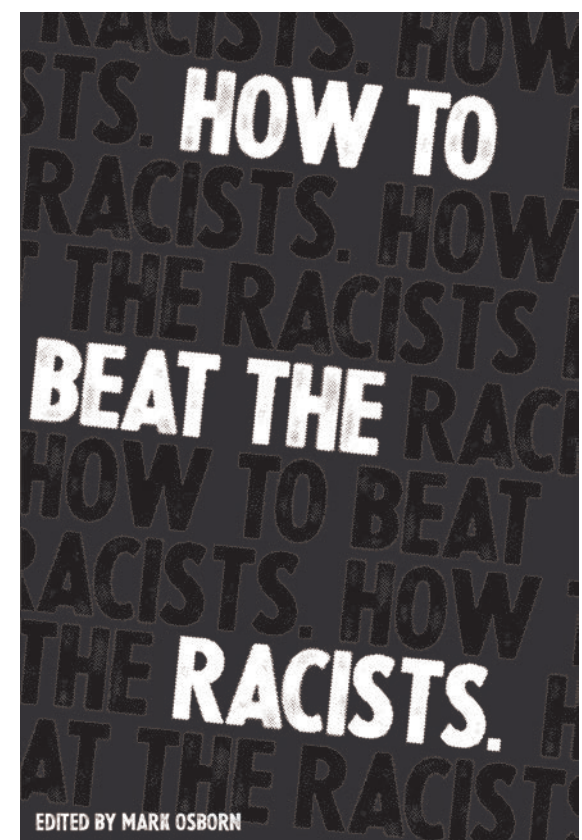
The system has been shaped by years of Tory governments, the current Labour government has scarcely offered improvement. The government is increasing Universal Credit basic rates by 6.2% on 6 April, and



promises further increases to total a 4.8% real-terms rise by 2029-30, but only 4.8%. Meanwhile it is cutting the health (LCWRA) element, to a total of £5 billion worth of cuts by 2030.

This “safety net” is totally unprepared to deal with sudden economic worsening and mass unemployment. □

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Stop censorship in school libraries

By Ruth Cashman

A school in Greater Manchester, allegedly made a list of over 130 titles to be removed from its library, against the wishes of the school's librarian. Local newsites claim the book banning mission was initially sparked by the head teacher seeing a copy of *Men Who Hate Women* by Laura Bates (a popular 2020 book about extremist misogyny in the manosphere) on the shelves.

The "inappropriate" books covered subjects like sexuality, gender, feminism and race — *We Should All Be Feminists* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, for example, and *Pageboy* by trans actor Elliot Page. Erin Enkins, the author of the book *Queerly Autistic*, which was among the 130 titles, described the culling as a "moral crusade".

According the Index on Censorship, the school's librarian was threatened with safeguarding action and even told she could be reported to the po-

lice for including inappropriate titles in the school library. She felt forced into resigning after the treatment by management and is reported to be receiving support from her union, the NEU.

Investigation

The school librarian, who has asked for anonymity, reported to the Index she had been instructed by the school's head teacher to remove *Men Who Hate Women* from the library shelves. She reluctantly agreed but then faced a conduct investigation about her book choices. Library collection management was then transferred with books appropriateness being based on an AI-generated criteria: books that were not written for children, books with themes that could be upsetting to children, and books that could be inappropriate or constitute a safeguarding risk. There was no professional judgement on the books by library staff or teachers.

The "Final List of books with inap-

propriate content" included a graphic novel version of Orwell's *1984*, *Will* by the actor Will Smith, *What's the T* and *The Trans Guide to Mental Health and Wellbeing*.

A Manchester e-newspaper, *The Mill*, has named the school as the Lowry Academy, a "Christian ethos" secondary in Salford run by United Learning Trust and with the Archbishop of Canterbury as a "patron".

Motions

Workers have drafted emergency motions to both NEU and Unison conferences about this case and about broader concerns on censorship in libraries as part of right-wing community campaigns and academies going rogue.

There is growing pressure to remove feminist and LGBTQ+ positive books. Last year the Index on Censorship survey found that 28 of 53 librarians polled — 53% — said that they had been asked to remove books. In more than

half of those cases, books were taken off shelves. Among the titles were *This Book Is Gay* by Juno Dawson, *Julián is a Mermaid*, a picture book by Jessica Love, and *ABC Pride* by Louie Stowell, Elly Barnes and Amy Phelps. More than 50% of the requests to remove books came from parents. Unions must be clear they back workers who defend diverse book collections and oppose censorship. □



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The third force: workers, women, and more

By Maryam Namazie

On 1 March 2026, the day before she was killed, Yanar Mohammed called for accountability for sex trafficking and for ISIS crimes against women at a conference in Baghdad.

The next morning, on 2 March, she was assassinated at her home.

Part of her human-centred politics was a rejection of the false choice between external bombing and war and internal Islamism and authoritarianism. A false binary of "choice" that aims to remove people's

capacity to determine their own future.

Whether war, authoritarianism or Islamism, power always reliably relocates onto controlling women and is formalised into law, family structures, and the public space. The Personal Status Laws in Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan or compulsory veiling are not trivial. They are declarations of how authority will be organised through the regulation of women's bodies, for the control of social reproduction itself.

Yanar Mohammed knew this and did not treat women's op-

pression as one issue among many. Control over women's bodies is not one mechanism of control. It is the mechanism through which power is made durable and stabilised and reproduced.

Structures

She understood that any movement that postpones women's liberation is not delaying it but preserving the structures it claims to oppose.

Yanar Mohammed built shelters, networks, a generation of activists, and a body of thought as politics itself, not alongside it.

For decades, she built structures that made it possible for women to live outside systems of violence in conditions where the state and its institutions refused protection.

She stood against all forms of power that depend on women's oppression under occupation, under Islamism, under constant threat and risk in Baghdad.

The people of Iran are now presented with a familiar false "choice" — external bombing or internal repression.



Yanar Mohammed

and Netanyahu claim change cannot happen without them.

Yanar Mohammed's life and struggle, like *Woman, Life, Freedom*, rooted in Kurdish struggle, shows a third way. It identifies where power is reproduced daily, through the control of women's bodies as a means of organising society.

Women are central because the system depends on their regulation.

Therefore, women's liberation is a condition of the liberation of our societies.

The beloved communist and feminist Yanar Mohammed was assassinated because this is the site of struggle at which oppressive systems are most exposed.

What she built was material, deliberate and revolutionary. It is what a better world is built on.

We commemorate her life and her struggle.

We and the world have lost a fierce and beloved comrade. The world was better with her in it; it is poorer now without her.

But her struggle continues. Long live Yanar Mohammed! □

Commemoration for Yanar Mohammed

On 29 March, a wide range of the Iraqi, Kurdish, and Iranian left gathered in Greenwich, south-east London, to pay tribute to Yanar Mohammed, a leading Iraqi feminist and member of the Organisation of the Communist Alternative in Iraq (OCAI), murdered by Islamists in Baghdad on 2 March 2026. Nico Dessaux, a French activist who worked with Yanar's organisations; someone from

the Frontline Socialist Party of Sri Lanka; John Moloney of PCS, in a personal capacity; and Martin Thomas from Workers' Liberty also spoke. Sadly, no other British left groups came. Here we print the speech by Maryam Namazie, a comrade of Yanar's from way back.

The OCAI's tribute is on our website at bit.ly/yanar-m, and Martin Thomas's tribute will be in the next few days. □



Ugly farce at spring conference

By Simon Nelson

The Spring Conference of the Green Party of England and Wales (GPEW), held online on Saturday 28 March, discussed only two motions. One resulted in a setback on energy policy, with a more ambiguous position on nationalising parts of the energy industry.

A successful attempt by supporters of the motion "Zionism is Racism" (ZiR) to get it heard as the third priority did not matter, as technical issues and long bouts of fighting over the Standing Orders Committee report meant the conference ran out of time. The motion only got a two-minute proposing speech before the conference closed, with no vote taken.

Approximately 1,000 people were logged into the conference at various times, which seemed too many for the technology to handle the votes. Perhaps predictably, The Canary suggested an Israeli-coordinated conspiracy against the conference software.

The disputes with the Standing Orders Committee and numerous attempts to no-confidence chairs will be remembered for the very polarised atmosphere that pitted highly-motivated supporters of ZiR against a much smaller number of vocal opponents.

In successfully moving the motion up the agenda, its supporters were very clear. Many of them were online only to see the GPEW take this stance; they claimed it is vital for the Palestinians that the motion is passed; all attempts to stop it are from "Zionists" and people who refuse to say Israel is committing a genocide. Support for the motion is anti-racist, and all opposition means dismissing racism. How the Palestinians are helped by the Green Party denouncing as "racist" all Jewish people with a reflex (and however critical) sympathy with Israeli Jewish life, they didn't say.

Squirmed

The leadership of the GPEW, which has squirmed around the issue, now has a few months before some version of it returns to the Autumn conference.

The speech against pushing ZiR up the agenda came from councillor Jo Bird, a one-time Corbynite Labour councillor in the Wirral and a former leading member of Jewish Voice for Labour. Her speech said the motion should not be discussed so that mediation and further consideration could take place and a new unifying motion be put forward in the autumn. That may well have had tacit leadership support.

Other committed "anti-Zionist" GPEW

members have also [urged caution](#). The Jewish Greens called to [vote against](#).

Around 600 voters seemed to be ready to support the motion had it been heard. A significant proportion of people were only being galvanised around this motion. However, with the GPEW focus on local elections and the Together Alliance March on the same day, it's hard to say exactly what the level of support would have been at a different conference.

Mediation

Supporters of an alternative "Peace-building in Israel Palestine" motion, which would get the GPEW to back forces, including Standing Together, who are fighting the occupation and the far-right Israeli government, from within Israel, should redouble efforts to have the political arguments against ZiR or whatever iteration makes it to the autumn conference on 2-4 October.



GPEW members should also now argue within their branches that the current model of individual members submitting, voting, and attending the conference is neither democratic nor laudable. Branches should adopt the routine of discussing motions, and a process should be put in place for their submission to the conference. A delegate in-person conference such as is common practice in the labour movement will not resolve the political issues, but it is vastly preferable to this farce. □

Can we "reset" local Labour Parties?

By David Axon

The 16 March Restore Labour Democracy rally attracted 350 people online. Speakers included Andrea Egan (Unison) and Steve Wright (FBU) as well as Campaign Group MPs, Momentum and CLPD. The linked statement had already attracted the support of five trade union leaders, 25 Labour

MPs, political groups such as Labour Left Internationalists and Momentum, and affiliated socialist societies such as the Socialist Health Association and Socialist Educational Association.

The statement points out that "a narrow, factional agenda is being imposed upon the Party and that this is increasingly unpopular with the

public." Members can add their names to "call on all those in the Parliamentary Labour Party, affiliated trade unions, and the wider Party membership who value and respect the vitally important role played by Labour Party and trade union members to join us in these efforts".

Second Statement

A second statement, Reset the Labour Party, has followed, designed not as a rival but as a base for the joint slate for the Labour National Executive Committee constituency places of Mainstream and the Centre Left Grassroots Alliance (CLGA), and attracting similar levels of MP and trade union support.

This second statement goes further than the first, in linking the need for Labour democracy to the question of Labour policy, referring to "continued underfunding of public services and local government, and the pandering to the talking points

of the far right". It calls for "a different path: fair taxation of the wealthiest, real investment in public services, taking essential services like energy and water into democratic ownership, and promoting peace and internationalism abroad".

Basis

There is a lot unsaid and much to clarify, but this provides some basis for a political discussion in branches and CLPs about Labour NEC nominations (which most CLPs will decide in May or June). All too often these can go through on the nod, or end up in a "three of yours, three of ours" arrangement between left and right. Worse, there are Labour left-wingers who don't make it to their branch or CLP meetings to push for any slate at all, or for left conference delegates (to be decided with a 26 June deadline: motions mostly come later).

CLGA and Mainstream are also backing candidates for the

National Policy Forum.

The CLGA is not an organisation so much as an agreement between groups, mainly the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and Momentum. It does not organise in CLPs, and nor (these days) do its constituent parts.

Mainstream is very bland in its prospectus, but it does appear to want to allow or even help party members to organise local groups, which, of course, once organised, need not and will not be limited by Mainstream's halfway politics.

It is early days for Mainstream. It did almost nothing at Labour conference 2025, attendance at its monthly online meetings has started to drop after an initial flurry of enthusiasm, and it still only has an "interim" council. But it could provide space to restart the local Labour left organising which had a beginning of revival against the disabled benefit cuts. □



Russia's "spring offensive" falters

By Michael Baker

As well as opposing Russia directly on the battlefield, Ukraine has opened a new front: forming strategic alliances with Russia's geopolitical enemies in the Middle East. On Friday 27 March, Ukraine and Saudi Arabia finalised a defence agreement based on the former's now extensive experience in defending against drone attacks. The following day, Qatar followed suit, and the UAE initiated talks.

Russia is a long-time ally of Iran, and the two show clear similarities in methods of attack, not least the prominence of drone strikes. Drones are looking to be the defining feature of warfare in this decade, and Russia and Ukraine are both pioneers in this new field (not a title one would hope to gain). On Tuesday 24 March alone, Russia fired over 900 drones at Ukraine, killing 2 people.

Bourgeois analysts have long said that Ukraine's post-war strategy of integrating into European and other Western security structures could hinge on

the country's new experience of modern industrial warfare, and this looks like the first example of that coming into practice. The Ukrainian army have become experts in anti-drone defence, which lately has entailed the production of interceptor drones, leading to horrific aerial cat-and-mouse games as Russian drones try to hit targets and take lives before Ukrainian ones can knock them out of the air.

Terrible

There is little for a socialist to celebrate in any of this news. In a just world, Ukraine would never have been forced to gain such terrible knowledge of drone warfare, and the safety of the Ukrainian people would not have anything to do with making international defence deals with oligarchic petro-states in the Middle East. But one can hardly be surprised that Ukraine's government is desperate to claim whichever allies and whatever gains it possibly can. Any port in a storm.

Russia's spring offensive is now underway, but seems to have made a much worse start than planned. The loss of Starlink satellite connection seems to have seriously hampered Russian aerial capabilities, and Ukraine has been able to hold off the new offensive from making any major advances.

Ukraine's own aerial attacks on Russian infrastructure, particularly oil, are starting to see results. Russia has announced a ban on oil exports from the start of April in an attempt to balance rising consumer oil costs within the country. This is in line with global oil prices rising due to the US-Israeli invasion of Iran, but exacerbated by successful Ukrainian attacks on oil infrastructure in Russia.

Talk of peace negotiations and an end to the war have faded into the distance as Trump's attention is drawn to a new war. In fact, we should take from this that a peaceful resolution would never have been possible without addressing the fundamental political schism at



the heart of the war: Russian imperialism wishes to see Ukraine crushed out of existence, and Ukraine — yes, even Eastern Ukraine — wishes to fight on for that existence.

What remains is the same struggle that has existed since February 2022: a war of national liberation that Ukraine is right to continue. Socialists should continue building solidarity and links with Ukrainian workers and supporting a Ukrainian victory. □

Film Review

Mr Nobody Against Putin

By Will Roberts

One of the big winners this Oscar season was the documentary *Mr. Nobody Against Putin*, Pavel Talankin's account of the school he worked at descending into militaristic chaos amid the outbreak of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

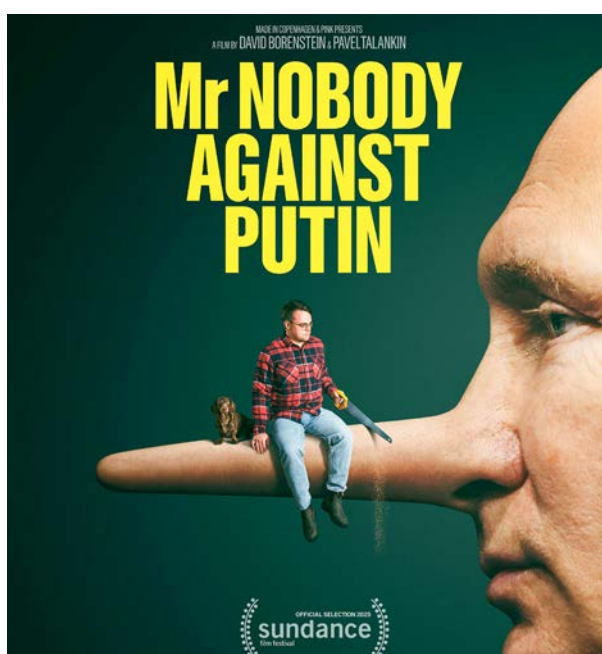
The film sees Talankin using his job at the time — videographer for a school in the small copper mining town of Karabash — as a pretext to capture footage of the school's population as curricula and routines are reconstructed and militarised. Lessons on the history of Russia are repurposed to fit a jingoistic anti-Ukrainian narrative, and special lesson plans sent out to teachers to encourage uptake from teachers across the country. Talankin's own job becomes to video these new propaganda lessons and ensure that they are uploaded to a government portal, presumably to be used in some other form of propaganda video, but in practice turning his camera into the omnipresent eye of the Kremlin, creeping into every classroom in the country.

The stories of students whose family members sign up to fight do a good job of puncturing the idea that this war is a welcome sight to all Russians. Seeing leaving barbecues and celebrations as graduates go off to the front line is tinged with a genuine fear, given what we know (and the students may not) about how lethal the front line of the war has been.

Flourishes

There are artistic flourishes and some scenes that have provoked questions about the film's authenticity, but none of the criticisms that I've read hold water. It is an impressive piece of documentary filmmaking that shows the very real process of everyday life continuing as an authoritarian state presses itself more and more into the lives of the Russian population.

Along with his Oscar, on Friday 27 March Talankin received the honorary award customary



for any anti-establishment Russian public figure since 2022: the government declared him a foreign agent, presumably not awarding anyone else the title that week (new names are released every Friday afternoon) to heighten the dramatic effect of the announcement.

The theatre of the Russian state's repression of activists and oppositionists saw a new development in the last week, too. Mobile internet was

switched off across Moscow, leaving many Russians stranded when completing basic day-to-day tasks.

Alongside the blackout came an attempted ban (successful, according to early reports) on messaging app Telegram, as the government try to force all Russians to use the state-owned Telegram clone Max for day-to-day tasks and basic state services.

Theories

The blackout was officially explained as an attempt to prevent Ukrainian drone attacks; if so, it's not a very serious attempt, and can be easily circumvented by the Ukrainian army. Theories abound as to the real reason: some suspected that Putin was "spooked" by the war in Iran and the sudden killing of Ayatollah Khamenei, so attempted to shut down all civil society (and therefore potential organised threat) in the entire city around him. This seems wildly implausible on a

number of levels, chief among them that blocking 5G internet would have almost no effect on a serious espionage operation within the Russian government — a decent off-the-shelf consumer VPN can get around most of the government's restrictions, let alone a national secret service.

So why the block? The most plausible guess so far is that the technology became available, so a dry run was ordered in Moscow to see how it could be used in more urgent scenarios later down the line.

Putin may stand to benefit economically from the war in Iran and its effect on the energy market. If so, it may buy him some time on a sinking ship. The Russian economy has been steadily worsening for years now, and rather than address the root cause of that problem — an auto-cannibalising imperialist war that Putin did not have to launch — his government have opted to go the other route, investing in and deploying ever more sophisticated tools of repression to crush any rising dissent in the population. □



Socialism and the “p

By Daniel Randall

Around fifteen years ago, I had a conversation with an activist who had worked alongside Workers' Liberty in the student movement, and was considering joining our group. He agreed with our ideas, but found the fact we published a regular printed paper unbearably old-fashioned.

“No-one reads newspapers anymore”, he insisted.

What should we use instead, I asked, when we met potentially interested people at work, on demonstrations, or in meetings? What would give them an accessible presentation of our ideas, and a sense of our activity?

His answer was that we should distribute small cards displaying QR codes that would take people to a range of online content, which he suggested should mostly consist of videos.

This conversation returned to mind upon reading James Marriott's viral Substack article “The Dawn of the Post-Literate Society”, published in September 2025.

“In the UK”, Marriott reports, “more than a third of adults say they have given up reading. The National Literacy Trust reports ‘shocking and dispiriting’ falls in children's reading, which is now at its lowest level on record.” Marriott argues the central factor in this decline is the form of attention mediation inculcated by smartphone use, combined with the modes of discourse incentivised by social media algorithms: “Where previous entertainment technologies like cinema or television were intended to capture their audience's attention for a period, the smartphone demands your entire life. Phones are designed to be hyper-addictive, hooking users on a diet of pointless notifications, inane short-form videos and social media rage bait.”

“Post-literacy” does not mean the end of reading. The ability to process symbols representing sounds into words remains. But it does mean a shift in the dominant form of literacy, from sustained engagement with longer texts to scrolling distraction-ridden, fragmented content streams, where often bitesize chunks of text sit alongside short-form video. Even for those who do read the entirety of longer texts from their smartphones or laptops, engagement is shallower. Studies have shown that readers who read from screens retain less than those who read from paper.

Marriott is a journalist for the *Times*, and therefore perhaps not an immediately obvious reference point for the revolutionary left. I wouldn't go along with all of the flourishes in his article. However, his basic presentation is com-

PELLING. The political implications are severe, but uneven. “Post-literacy” presents a far greater problem for the left than the right.

Marriott's historical picture — an “age of print”, which inculcated democratic politics, being overthrown by a counter-revolutionary “age of the screen”, which precipitates the “death of democracy” — is dramatically oversimplified. It has surely not escaped his notice that some of the worst affronts to democracy in human history took place in the pre-smartphone era.

Consequences

There is also an element of technological reductionism in his argument. The harms caused by “the age of the screen” are not the inevitable consequences of an uncontrollable technological force humanity has unthinkingly unleashed. Rather, they are products of the development of forms of technology driven by and in the context of a particular political economy. A central feature here is the deep commodification of human attention.

Marriott's article recognises “the concentration of wealth, power, and knowledge” at “the top of society”, and even fears a “second feudalism” driven by tech firms that profit from ignorance. But there is little acknowledgement of the political-economic choices that underpin this. Marriott rightly laments the impacts of post-literacy on academic culture, but spends no time considering how the neoliberal commodification of higher education might have created the conditions for those impacts. There is no comment on how weak worker protections and anti-union laws have facilitated the ascendancy of tech firms to their current position of global economic dominance.

Like almost all forms of capitalist development, these technologies also have progressive potentials, which the article overlooks. If I want to find a copy of a particular book, or organise a group to collectively read and discuss a philosophical treatise, a novel, or, indeed, “The Dawn of the Post-Literate Society”, the quickest, easiest, and most effective way of doing so is by using a smartphone.

Overall, though, Marriott's presentation of the spread of post-literacy is hard to refute. The left must urgently confront its implications for our own movement. Some writing on this topic can feel like middle-class sneering, bemoaning the symptoms of post-literacy as if they are a moral failing on the part of uneducated plebs. Marriott's article avoids this tone. In any case, it is us “plebs”, those less powerful, who have

most to lose from the post-literate society. As Marriott puts it, “The tech oligarchs have just as much of a stake in the ignorance of the population as the most reactionary feudal autocrat.”

Karl Marx once described the aim of revolutionary thought as “Ruthless criticism of all that exists.” He did not mean mere negative opposition, but the development of a worldview: a thoroughgoing critique of social conditions, in order to fight to change them. To do this, we need an accurate picture of the world we are critiquing. This requires reading a range of sources, including lengthy analyses which may refer to academic literature.

This kind of engagement requires deep literacy: the ability to concentrate on texts for long enough to follow their arguments and weigh them against others; the ability to follow claims, references, and citations back to their origin. A picture of the world built up mostly from “news” derived from social media, where catchcry emotional agitation and a barrage of ephemeral content predominates, is both less accurate, and significantly more vulnerable to manipulation by demagogues and reactionaries.

Sceptical

Many leftists are instinctively sceptical of centrist critiques of social media, which may share some features in common with Marriott's, that bemoan its “polarising” effect. The real drivers of “polarisation” are not intemperate tweets, but government policies which exacerbate inequality, and especially a pandering to the far right over immigration. Centrists often promote a generic “meet-in-the-middle” spirit of moderation and compromise as the alternative to polarisation, an approach which invariably helps preserve the status quo. By contrast, radical leftist politics are themselves an effort at social polarisation, on a class basis.

But the left cannot simply repurpose social media's polarising effects for our own ends. The modes of discourse its platforms encourage and reward are performative and solipsistic. They privilege knee-jerk outrage over detailed critique, often leading to a flattening of all nuance. The “polarisation” we seek is, as the lyrics of ‘The Internationale’ put it, a matter of “reason in revolt” — meaning both a revolt of reason against irrationality, and reason in the revolt, that is, basing our politics on a thought-through critique of the status quo.

A movement that requires only acolytes and foot soldiers can mobilise them through social media's post-literate modes. Politics that require workers

to be what Antonio Gramsci called “permanent persuaders” and “democratic philosophers” need something different. Achieving socialism requires billions of working-class people to take conscious ownership over society's direction. That in turn requires the ability to think, reason, argue, debate and persuade, and to produce and refine ideas. If only an elite layer within movements possesses these capabilities, then even if some future revolution succeeds in overthrowing capitalism, what will replace it will more likely resemble Stalinism, a grotesque caricature of socialism, than anything genuinely emancipatory.

Movements

Revolutionary workers' movements have always been profoundly literate, and literary. Chartism, the first mass workers' movement in Britain, was spread in part through a network of newspapers and pamphlet presses. The Chartist press directly concerned itself with questions of literacy and literature, sometimes reprinting verse by Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, and Shelley, contesting the idea that “high literature” should be the preserve of the wealthy. The Chartist press also published poetry and prose by worker authors.

Eleanor Marx, a leader in trade-union and migrant-worker struggles in the late-1800s, made one of her most significant contributions to class struggle by teaching Will Thorne, a gasworker militant she had met through their fellow membership of the Social Democratic Federation, to read.

In 1908, a group including mine-worker and theorist of revolutionary industrial unionism Noah Ablett founded the Plebs' League, a caucus of students at Ruskin College which pioneered the concept of independent working-class education. Their activity was organised around a publication, *Plebs' Magazine*. Antonio Gramsci undertook similar activity in the class-struggle ferment of 1920s Italy, through his Group for Communist Education, and the newspaper *L'Ordine Nuovo* (The New Order).

The Social Democratic Party in Germany, whose pre-World War One period arguably represents the world-historic high-point of working-class political organisation, stressed reading, written exchange, and study of lengthy, complex texts. Party schools, where leaders like Rosa Luxemburg taught, trained workers, often with only basic levels of formal education, in the forms of literacy necessary to engage with and produce ideas and theory.

In the Russian Revolution of 1917, the first sustained experiment in working-class rule in history, the Bolsheviks

ost-literate society”

and other revolutionary socialist parties carried on continuous exchanges, polemics, and educational efforts, in newspapers, journals, factory bulletins, books, and other written materials.

In Vietnam, the Trotskyists who were central to labour and anti-colonial insurgencies before their suppression by Ho Chi Minh's Stalinists organised around magazines and newspapers, including *Tranh Dau* (Struggle), a daily paper with a reported circulation of 15,000.

More recently, the social and class insurgencies of the late-1960s and early-1970s were characterised by a vibrant print culture, which in Britain included socialist-feminist publications like *Red Rag*, and rank-and-file newspapers and bulletins in numerous workplaces and industries.

A purely instrumental view of this history might conclude it was all a matter of the available technologies. If Rosa Luxemburg had access to social media, would she have focused on content creation rather than teaching workers to read *Capital*? We can only make an educated guess. But other recent evidence, drawn from experiences of struggle, certainly seems to reaffirm the claim that revolutionary social transformation requires modes of organising, and therefore of discourse, that are much deeper than those of the post-literate society.

To understand the implications of post-literacy for left-wing political organisation specifically, Marriott's article is usefully read alongside two other texts, Malcolm Gladwell's 2010 article "Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted", and Vincent Bevins' 2023 book *If We Burn*.

Gladwell argued that movements based on "weak ties" formed by social media could never carry through comprehensive social change, which requires "deep ties" built through sustained face-to-face interaction in common organisations. Bevins' book surveys, from the other end of the decade, 10 years of inspiring, but ultimately unsuccessful, radical social upheavals, and reaches broadly similar conclusions.

Organisation

Both texts indicate the importance of permanent, structured organisations, rather than looser, would-be "horizontal" or structureless movements. Building democratic organisations that foster "deep ties" requires deep literacy: mass participation in debate, producing and critiquing written proposals for policy and strategy, scrutinising the records of proceedings in order to hold



Rosa Luxemburg (fourth from left) at the SPD Party School where she was the chief lecturer

elected leaders and officials to account, and being able to understand and interrogate movement history in order to assess contemporary perspectives against those of the past. A left that relies on digital content circulated via social media cannot hope to train activists in these skills.

The tiny, scattered forces of the existing revolutionary left cannot fix at will any of the problems Marriott highlights. What we can do is fight for the wider labour movement to actively pursue struggles for reforms which will help. The proposed ban on social media use by under-16s, prominently supported by National Education Union leader Daniel Kebede but rejected by Parliament, was something of a blunt instrument. But education unions' wider policy programmes could make a real difference, if enacted: an increase in education funding, the decommodification of higher education, the abolition of tuition fees, better pay and conditions for school workers, smaller class sizes. All of these would create better conditions for teaching the skills of deep literacy to people earlier in life, and embedding those skills through further and higher education.

Culture

We can also train activists in the skills of deep literacy through the cultures we build in our own organisations. The left needs an online and social-media presence. But its function should not simply be to feed people content, or provide a generically left-wing take on current affairs. More of the left's time and resources should be dedicated to in-person discussion and study of written texts, including both the "classics" of our movement and more contemporary writing. Workers' Liberty

tries to prefigure this culture as much as possible, publishing longer analytical and historical pieces in our fortnightly paper *Solidarity* alongside more agitational pieces, commentary, and reports of struggles. We continue to publish books and pamphlets, a socialist-feminist magazine *Women's Fightback*, and workplace bulletins. We run book clubs and reading groups, and produce study guides on particular texts and ideas.

The mass institutions of the broader labour movement, though diminished, retain significant social weight. A drive by trade unions to build deep literacy amongst worker activists, through reading groups and schools on trade union history and organising theory, could produce real results. The *Morning Star* sometimes poses as a broad trade-union paper, but is effectively a Stalinist tabloid. We should aspire to a labour-movement press modelled more on the Chartist press, the first decade of the *Daily Herald*, and *Plebs' Magazine*.

In all of this, efforts to maximise accessibility are essential. Some people may need to engage with texts in different formats, either as an initial step or simply because those are the formats accessible to them for reasons of disability or neurodivergence. The aim is to make as many of the skills of deep literacy as possible accessible to the maximum possible numbers, not to ordain a priest caste drawn from those who, for reasons of social background and educational privilege, come to the table with pre-existing advantages.

Material obstacles to this work must also be taken account of. It is easier for someone in a higher-paying job with shorter hours, or with fewer caring responsibilities, to spend time on these

activities. But if Will Thorne was right to dedicate some of the little free time available to him, outside gruelling 12-hour workdays in Beckton Gas Works, to having Eleanor Marx teach him to read, we must seek ways to enable ourselves and others to make similar commitments. Every socialist activist should aspire to be both Thorne and Marx, both student and teacher.

The two most substantial left media institutions in Britain today are *Tribune* and Novara. Marriott was recently interviewed sympathetically on the latter's YouTube channel. Whatever their merits or otherwise, they are both almost wholly online efforts. *Tribune* appears in print quarterly, and there are some online reports of real-world readers' groups, but mostly from several years ago. Beyond occasional live podcast recordings, Novara's output has no "real-world" extension. Their content is overwhelmingly consumed individually, on screens, and discussed, if at all, through social-media comment threads.

They are better than nothing. But we need something more.

My interlocutor from 15 years ago was right, of course. Newspaper reading had declined. It has declined further since. So has book reading. But we cannot simply shrug and adapt. Unless we can push back post-literacy, our political project is hindered, perhaps fatally. Socialism, the wresting of control over our destinies from the hands of capital, is, by necessity, a deeply literate project. It cannot be achieved with post-literate means.

Marriott's article has an apocalyptic tone, foreseeing "the end of civilisation". He posits no potential agency that might intervene in the conditions he describes in order to change them. His personal remedy has been to get rid of his own smartphone, a lifestyle choice many will find it difficult to make.

We can heed the alarm his article sounds without sharing his conclusions. The task of responding in a way that connects to our own political ends falls, obviously, to us. The first step is to ensure the culture of our movement confronts post-literacy rather than pandering to it or, worse, imagining we can appropriate it. Remaking socialism as a real alternative to capitalism begins with working-class self and mutual education. Today's revolutionary left, in the spirit of Eleanor Marx, the Plebs' League, and *L'Ordine Nuovo*, must strive, again, to establish cultures of deep literacy within the labour movement. □



We need social provision, not the market

By Alice Hazel

Overall attendances at hospital emergency departments (EDs) and calls to ambulance services continue to increase. The Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM) list attendances at Type 1 (24hr consultant led) A&Es as 1,298,005 for February 2026, compared to 1,271,336 for the same time last year, up about 2%. Ambulance services report an annual increase in 999 calls of around 5%.

Amid press reports of continued A&E overcrowding and corridor care, the NHS England recovery plan for emergency services puts emphasis firstly, on developing alternatives to divert patients who don't need A&E into other community based services; and secondly on getting closer to the four-hour A&E waiting target, which EDs are improving on but nowhere near meeting. This target focuses on the least unwell patients, i.e. get them seen and out the door.

The RCEM argues that this strategy ignores the most important clinical problem, that of very unwell patients remaining in A&E departments, often in corridors, for over 12 hours. Last month, this happened to one in eight patients – the worst February figure on record. This is the critical issue behind the estimated 320 patients a week who die as a direct result of delays in accessing A&E care or a bed on a ward.

The government is probably failing to focus on this target because it is seen as difficult, an unlikely candidate for NHS good news stories. Waits in A&E of over 12 hours are caused by a whole system failing – hospital overcrowding.

February saw an average 94.3% bed occupancy, rather than the recognised safe level of 85%.

The answer is relatively clear. Immediately stop the cuts, which continue despite overall increases in the NHS budget. Increase hospital beds to the OECD average of 4.6 beds per 1,000 population (the UK has just 2.4). Provide adequate staffing. And, in the medium term, provide a funded national social care system.

Capacity

That is desperately needed, in itself, for the dignity of many. It will also go far to increase hospital capacity, as up to one in three English hospital beds are occupied by people who are medically fit for discharge but remain in hospital because adequate social care is unavailable.

The solutions are clear. But they mean taxing the rich and challenging the class interests that Starmer and Streeting defer to.

I hear a "common sense" version of the government's strategy daily at work with the NHS, when I'm asked about "time wasters" calling ambulances, or for stories about the "ridiculous things" I've seen people turn up to A&E with. There seems to be a wide perception that the NHS crisis is caused by such things. The government's public focus on diverting people away from A&E may boost this false understanding.

At times frustrated emergency workers will tell that tale too. Although, in fact, studies show that when questioned about this healthcare workers do understand that most people who use emergency services, when other services, or

even friends or neighbours, could have met their needs, do so because "they've reached their limits of coping", or due to failures in health and social care systems. The picture of "feckless" worried well people swamping services is a myth. Overall poor physical health status is associated with ambulance use for non-urgent conditions rather than specific symptoms or conditions.

The framing of problems in health care and other services as individual failings is a common narrative that cuts against real understanding. Alongside individual behaviours causing overcrowding of services, we are told that individual failings – lack of exercise, poor diet, addiction – lie behind poor health in the first place. Individual action – dieting, resilience, taking time for self-care – are the answer, without any mention of social context and corporate profit making.

Responsibility

That is an abdication of responsibility of government to provide healthy food regulations, green spaces to exercise, good pay, public services and workers' rights to support worker well-being. Even in the society-wide Covid pandemic, individual remedies – social distancing, masking – were given preference over effective structural interventions such as paid sick leave, better ventilation, requisitioning of private medical facilities.

The focus on individual choice, against collective organisation, is central in neoliberal capitalism. Even as the world away from neoliberal pattern of free trade, the lives we live – dominated by isolation, lack of community

resources, and reduced collective services and spaces – are increasingly individualised. The idea that we need to go to the market for what we need, health procedures included, is growing.

Neoliberal ideas of life as an individual "investment", and the theory that market forces create an optimal distribution of resources, frame both policy-making and our thinking and behaviours.

Holding strong opinions on the right and ability to make personal choices (i.e. "orientation to an internal locus of control or feeling that you can have any control of your life") is associated with positive health behaviours. But assuming this as an isolated factor in individual decision-making fails to understand that capitalism does not distribute resources evenly. Our "individual choices" are deeply affected by underlying economic sources of distress, including how neoliberalism fosters mindsets and social orientations that contribute to widespread anxiety and depression. In a society dominated by isolation, our ability to self-care is undermined.

"Diverting people away from A&E" and "encouraging people to make healthy choices" won't be achieved by government lecturing us to be more careful.

Socialists need to call for the rebuilding of public services, and a NHS and social care system funded through taxing the rich. And we need the strategy to build a movement that can demand this. Building this on the basis of collective action and solidarity can counter the isolating consequences of neoliberalism both for us as individuals and for our communities. □

Arms trade

New report gives the facts

By Harold Storey

The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) works to stop the whole international arms trade, and for years has focused mainly on UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.

Its latest [report](#) covers UK arms exports in, and leading up to, 2024. It both tells us the scale of the trade in death, and undercuts illusions common on the left that trade is mostly about the UK equipping Israel's genocide in Gaza, or the UK aiding Ukraine on a scale that undercuts public services in Britain.

The government partially suspended licences for arms exports to Israel in September 2024. However, components used in F-35 aircraft are still licensed (the components go not to Israel, but to the US, which then supplies some F-35s to Israel). And some Single Individual Export licences for military components were still being issued to Israel, making a total of £142 million in 2024 (most, apparently, for radars and sensors).

Israel, however, was not among the top recipients for licences even before the suspension. Saudi Arabia (£2,979 million, 32.3%), Ukraine

(£1,083m, 11.7%), and Qatar (£810m, 8.8%) were the UK's top three recipients, and Gulf states in total had 44%. Saudi Arabia's large receipt of weapons in 2024 was mostly about replenishing stock following their bombing campaign in Yemen in 2022.

Socialists support arms embargos on Israel, but we are clear that is not "the answer". Israel receive a small percentage of the UK's arms exports, and the UK supplies a tiny part Israel's overall arms imports. Israel is itself a major military producer and exporter, and would be capable of its genocide in Gaza and its bombing



in Iran and Lebanon without UK arms exports. Our best answer is solidarity with political revolt inside Israel, by both Palestinian and Jewish workers.

Arms exports to Ukraine surely have increased. These exports are significant, but much smaller than exports

to the Gulf states, insufficient to secure Ukrainian victory against Russian Imperialism, and, in the degree that they are aid rather than sales for hard cash, tiny compared to the whole UK government budget. □

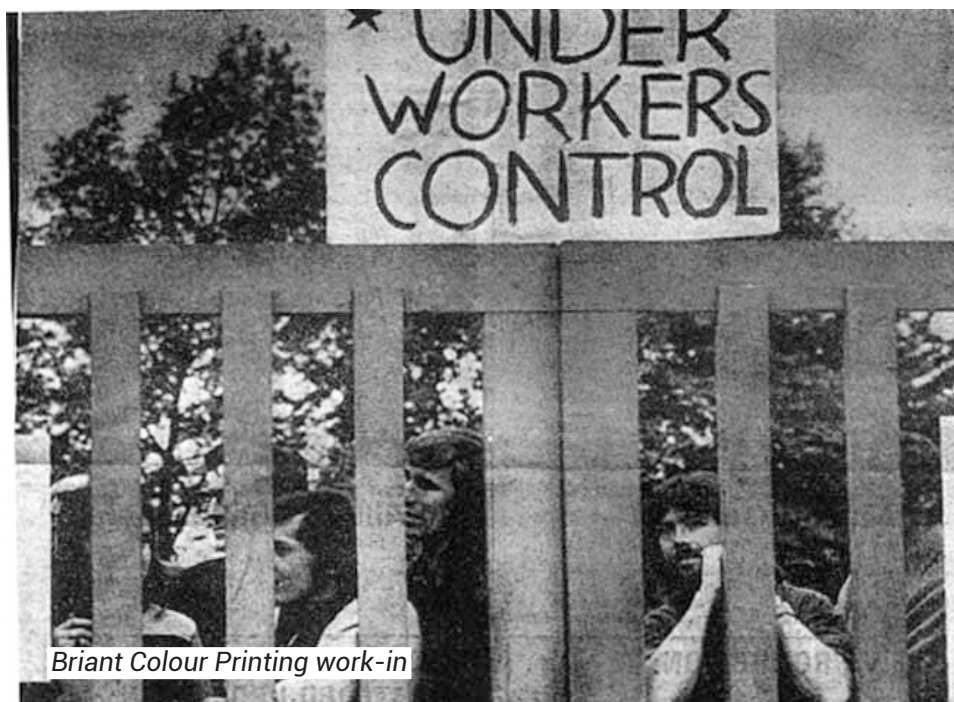
Workers' control: the Best Possible Management

By Bas Hardy

The boss is an idiot! Doesn't know how the business works! I can run things better than him/her in my sleep. How many times have workers expressed such sentiments down the years? Often the object of their ire is some newly appointed officious management type thinking they know it all, dismissive of the experience and knowledge of those regarded as underlings.

When it comes to major capitalist enterprises, though, you can be certain those nominally in charge don't give a shit about what their workforce thinks, because they feel the same way about the customers. One only has to consider the CEOs of those privatised water companies pumping sewage into the rivers and seas for that to be confirmed. You can also bet that workers in those companies are aware of the dreadful way they are run and have sound ideas on how to fix them to benefit consumers. The problem is workers don't have control.

According to bourgeois economics, capital in the form of owners of the means of production has the unique gift



Briant Colour Printing work-in

of being able to run industries. Labour is there to provide the muscle and brain. Dispensing with capital would prove a disaster since workers are incapable of running things.

Examples

Yet there are numerous examples of workers taking control of and running industries. Many occurred in the 1970s. 260 episodes of workers taking control in Britain alone were registered in that decade with varying degrees of success. Workers were either occupying their workplaces to prevent redundancies or to advance their wage demands, with the occupation of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS) in 1971 being the most famous example.

The Glasgow UCS 'work-in' aimed to save 13,000 shipbuilding jobs on the Clyde after the company went into receivership. The response of the workforce was not to go on strike but to take over the yards and complete existing orders. Their action gained considerable public support and forced the then Tory government of Edward Heath to inject £35 million in cash to stabilise the yards.

Once the work-in was over though the workers relinquished control which was handed back to capitalist management in the form of private ownership and after 1977 as a nationalised industry. Nevertheless, UCS demonstrated the effectiveness of direct action and community solidarity in defence of jobs and went on to inspire workers elsewhere.

Strike-ins at the Plessey factory in Alexandria Scotland and Fisher-Bendix at Kirkby on Merseyside had managers evicted, barricades set up and unfinished work blocked from leaving the factories unless permanent jobs were guaranteed. These were real workers' occupations. Fisher-Bendix workers guarded the factory gates with water hoses and held fully democratic meetings involving the workers' families as well.

BCP

Another work-in around that time was at Briant Colour Printing (BCP) on the Old Kent Road in South London which I reported on in *Workers' Fight* newspaper (a forerunner of *Solidarity*). London in those days still had a lot of manufacturing industries, but the attraction of relocating businesses closer to the motorway network was one of the major reason for their exodus from the capital.

BCP workers faced redundancy despite having a full order book, often turning work away. The new owners however wanted to sell the site to property speculators and transfer work to their other plants. On the first day of the work-in the works' director locked himself into his office and remained there for several days.

When I interviewed the BCP Father of the Chapel (as print union officials were quaintly called in those days – they also had Mothers of the Chapel though certainly not so many!) the works' director had asked him whether an accountant

could enter the factory. "Yes", came the reply, "but he's not going out again! Neither are you, until we get our money back." The BCP workers were waiting for the company to return their Sports and Social Club money and holding the two hirelings as collateral!

The numerous examples and episodes of workers' control via work-ins and factory occupations in the 1970s had varying degrees of success. They worked far better in terms of advancing wage demands like in the engineering industries in the Midlands than they did in the safeguarding factory jobs. To a certain extent they formed a rearguard actions against deindustrialisation. The intent to run workplaces on a permanent basis by and for the benefit of the workforce was largely absent.

In Besancon, France, however, such an attempt was made in 1973. This involved the watch manufacturing company LIP. The factory faced closure as a result low cost competition from Asia. LIP workers occupied the factory and continued production under the slogan "It's possible: we make them, we sell them, we get paid." Various forces on the left ranging from the Socialist Party to the Ligue Communiste campaigned in support of the workers and the French government gave the factory some support. However, LIP finally went into liquidation in 1977.

Although these effort at workers' control represented an advance in workers struggles the conclusion is rather similar to the case of municipal socialism discussed in earlier In Retrospect articles. Genuine workers' control is not possible unless there is a workers' state. In any other situation worker run industries will ultimately fail, either ending up squeezed out of markets by capitalist concerns or having government subsidies withdrawn.

We also need to consider why there aren't all that many examples of workers taking control of things nowadays. In part it's to do with the decline of manufacturing – In the 1970s it was 25% of the workforce, it is now 10%. It might be difficult to imagine how workers' control would operate in service industries like banks, for example, yet hospitals and schools would be vastly improved if they were run democratically by their workforces. It would represent, as the BCP workers termed it back then, The Best Possible Management! □

THE VESTAS JOBS BATTLE



£3

Vestas wind turbine blade workers occupied their factory at St Cross, Newport, on 20 July 2009. They demanded that the Government nationalise Vestas Isle of Wight factories and continue production of turbine blades. This pamphlet brings together that story through the eyes of Vestas workers and their supporters. £4 (inc. post) □ bit.ly/shop-wl



Cuba: a reply to Martyn Ahmet



By Paul Abbot

Martyn Ahmet's article in *Solidarity* 761 dealing with my report on Cuba in 759 was thoughtful and interesting. He calls for a critical yet ultimately supportive orientation towards the government in Cuba.

Ahmet points to the campaign to reduce illiteracy in the 1960s and asks "what sort of 'capitalist' country" would carry out such wide-ranging reforms? A short answer would be, one like Tanzania or Libya from the 1970s, Algeria from the 1960s, or India from 1947, all longer but starting from much worse illiteracy and poverty. Stalinist countries have certainly done impressive literacy drives.

The reform programme of the 1960s in Cuba was not carried out on the basis of mass mobilisation which the Castro government was forced to keep up with, but rather by an authoritarian government implementing policies which enjoyed popular support. This does not mean that mass literacy campaigns or expropriations of American plantations were bad, but we should be clear-eyed about what was happening in Cuba.

Bonapartism

Bonapartism is a useful lens through which to think about the Castro government, as Samuel Farber does in detail in *Revolution and Reaction in Cuba, 1933-1960*. The Castro government was not seeking to be a better steward of cap-

italism and the existing order than the capitalists themselves were able to be (which is how Farber characterises Batista). But it was about implementing a new managerial form of rule over Cuban society. There was often popular support; but not independent working-class organisation.

The Castro government ultimately prevailed, against Batista, but also against independent working-class organisation. For instance, the dictatorial measures taken at the Tenth Trade Union Congress in November 1959 were not just about ensuring the unions had a pro-Castro leadership, but about transforming these organisations into structural loyalty, under government control.

There are different conditions which working-class movements find themselves under and different orientations they might take to other social forces, but, if there is no independent working-class organisation, then the result is not socialism.

One of the chief problems facing Cuba today is the US embargo, in operation since 1960, which bars US businesses and citizens from trade with Cuban interests (with exceptions from time to time, now tightened), and the recent partial blockade (stopping other trade with Cuba).

The purpose of the embargo was to weaken Cuba, and of the current partial blockade to bring down its government via inflicting hardship on ordinary people; it is the duty of socialists everywhere to oppose it. Ahmet finds fault with my article for only acknowledging it and not treating it as "determinative" for the situation Cuba is in today.

The embargo and the blockade are far from the sole causes of the economic problems in Cuba. The government is run in a heavily bureaucratised manner, which prioritises the lifestyles and control of a privileged caste over the vast majority of the population. Cuba's rulers are in very difficult circumstances, but that cannot oblige us to stop siding with Cuba's workers against them.

Self-determination

Socialists should be consistent defenders of the right to national self-determination, which in the case of Cuba means opposing US attacks, calling for an end to the blockade and embargo, and defending the Cuban people's right to decide their own form of government without US interference. Hal Draper wrote about this same issue during the [early years](#) of the Castro government.

"The right of Cuba (or any other country) to self-determination has absolutely nothing to do with whether we or anyone else approve of its government. This is, as we said, a democratic



demand even under an undemocratic government. We would like to see the Castro regime overthrown by the Cuban people in favour of a regime of socialist democracy, but this task cannot be contracted out to American imperialism, which is interested only in installing a regime subservient to world capitalism."

That doesn't mean supporting the Cuban government against its own people. Its collapse would be beneficial to the US, but we can't just write a plus where the US government writes a minus. There is a third camp here.

Ahmet argues that socialists should be "defending the historical gains of a revolution under siege while supporting struggles to deepen participation and accountability".

I do not agree that the system in Cuba is imperfect but basically going in the right direction. I do think that socialists should oppose the siege on Cuba (currently largely economic but with the potential to become more explicitly military under Trump), oppose imperialist encroachment and privatisation in Cuba, and support struggles within Cuba for democracy. You could say that is not a million miles from what Ahmet calls for. But it is a different perspective.

Solidarity

What does this look like in practical terms? What could a genuinely independent and socialist form of solidarity work with the Cuban people look like? It does not look like the recent *Nuestra America* flotilla which largely served to bolster the prestige of the government – the Cuban activist Yasmani Castro [responded](#) that participants "should have at least walked through Central Havana and Old Havana one night during a blackout".

People in Cuba are angry at the conditions that have been forced on them, and are directing the anger not just at the US but their own government.

Earlier in March there were protests

in Morón where protesters stormed the Communist Party headquarters. In their report on the protests, the anti-Stalinist revolutionary socialist organisation *Comunistas Cubas* [call](#) for opposition to the blockade and the Díaz Canel government and support for the independent working class in Cuba.

How can we relate to these protesters and socialists? We should not tell them to set aside their struggles because they might weaken the Cuban state in the face of the US. Thankfully they wouldn't listen to us if we did.

There have been talks between senior Cuban politicians and the Trump administration, and at the time of writing a Russian tanker carrying 100,000 tonnes of crude oil has been able to enter Cuban waters unhampered. It is the job of socialists to fight against the predatory circling around Cuba by the US, and to support working-class and socialist forces in Cuba, including against their own government. □

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Proletariat, philosophy, manifesto

By Colin Waugh

In *Solidarity* 751 I aimed to show that activists of Chartism and its predecessor struggles were strongly geared towards collective class-struggle self-education. In *Solidarity* 760 I discussed how the activities of James (Bronterre) O'Brien related to this impulse.

Chartism was the world's first national-level working-class mass movement, in the world's first heavily industrialised country. It aimed to transform the parliamentary electoral system in Britain so fundamentally that workers could use it to meet their real needs, thereby destroying the dominance exercised by landowners and the capitalist owners of large-scale industry.

O'Brien was a central activist of this movement. Of such leaders, he alone tried consistently to put forward a theoretical model of what Chartism was about. This model centred on a distinction between "direct slavery", as in the Greco-Roman ancient world, and its continuation, "indirect slavery", of which contemporary waged labour was the key example.

Karl Marx wrote the Manifesto of the Communist Party in German in late January 1848, for publication by the Communist League, a group made up mostly of artisans expelled by continental governments for their political activities. These groups assumed, rightly, that revolutions were about to break out in their home countries, that these revolutions would introduce bourgeois democratic electoral systems of the same broad type as the one in Britain, and that they themselves would shortly return to join in struggles to make this happen.

In this context Marx set out through the Manifesto to convince activists like these that they should try to do in their own countries what the Chartists were trying to do in Britain. He argued that: "the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy". This would involve them, first, in creating mass pressure to make whatever electoral systems emerged as democratic as possible. Secondly they should try to make the biggest gains they could in any elections that took place. And thirdly they should use any power gained in this way to put through pro-working class measures.

But Marx went further than this, predicting that: "The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest by degrees all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, ie the proletariat organised as the ruling class..." In the beginning this will entail:

"... despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bour-



geois production; by means of measures ... which appear economically insufficient and untenable but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of revolutionising the mode of production..."

In other words, he connected a political approach derived from Chartism to a longer term strategy aimed at socio-economic as well as political revolution.

Long-term

In 1838 the then prominent Chartist orator Joseph Rayner Stephens, at a mass meeting on Kersal Moor near Salford, memorably said that Chartism was "a knife and fork question". These words were powerful because many of Stephens's hearers had become factory workers in England to escape starvation in Ireland, and now faced it again here because of factory lay-offs. Much the same threat hung over many workers when Marx wrote the Manifesto ten years later. In this, however, he set out to integrate the fully justified Chartist focus on consumption with a longer-term conception of how "proletarians" could take control of production.

Also in the Manifesto he wrote:

"All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air".

What does this formulation imply?

Marx of course knew that even in Britain the "proletarians", ie the industrial workers, did not form a majority of the working class as a whole, because this also included large numbers of agricultural labourers, domestic servants and declassed artisans in fields like tailoring and shoemaking. Because he knew this he looked upon industrial workers dynamically — that is, not statically as a sociological group but as the only peo-

ple with the capacity to bring about fundamental societal change. He thought they could and would do this by leading wider and wider circles of workers more generally in action which neither the landed class nor the capitalists would be able to control.

Marx expressed this idea in the Manifesto, but he had developed it earlier in the 1840s in disputes with other German intellectuals who, like him, had undergone a training in academic philosophy.

A philosophical tradition existed in Germany which did not exist here. In this tradition, academic philosophers regularly investigated the history and social role of religion. Marx was trained to PhD level in this tradition. Drawing on this training he then took part in a number of often heated exchanges with others from the same background. Through doing so, and in opposition to most of them, he worked out his own highly distinctive conception of ideological struggle, which already included a belief about how working-class activists and traditional intellectuals like himself should interact.

Universal

This found expression in, among other writings, Marx's Introduction to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, published in Paris early in 1844. Here, focusing on the situation and prospects in Germany, he described the emergence of "... a class with radical chains, a class that is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society having a universal character because of its universal suffering and claiming no particular right because no particular wrong but unqualified wrong is perpetrated on it ... a sphere which does not partially oppose the consequences but totally opposes the premises of the German political system; a sphere, finally, that cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all the other spheres of society, thereby emancipating them; a sphere, in short, that is the complete loss of humanity and can only redeem itself through the total redemption of humanity. This dissolution of society as a particular class is the

proletariat".

He went on from this to say that: "As philosophy finds its material weapons in the proletariat, the proletariat finds its intellectual weapons in philosophy" — in other words he visualised a form of interaction between people who, like him, had undergone a formal education in academic philosophy, with industrial workers, in which the workers actively appropriate to themselves a capacity for philosophical thinking. He adds that: "... once the lightning of thought has deeply struck this unsophisticated soil of the people, the Germans will emancipate themselves..."

When Marx wrote this he already knew a certain amount about Chartism from articles about Britain that Frederick Engels wrote for the *Rheinische Zeitung* paper that Marx was editing. Then in June 1844 weavers in Silesia rose up in revolt. Marx wrote an article about this, which began by referring to a song that was popular amongst the weavers at the start of this uprising, which he described as "a bold call to action", pointing out that in it: "there is not even a mention of hearth and home, factory or district, but in [it] the proletariat at once, in a striking, sharp, unrestrained and powerful manner, proclaims its opposition to the society of private property". Further:

"The Silesian uprising begins precisely with what the French and English workers end, with consciousness of the nature of the proletariat. The action itself bears the stamp of this superior character. Not only machines, these rivals of the workers, are destroyed, but also ledgers, the titles to property. And while all other movements were aimed primarily only against the owner of the individual enterprise, the visible enemy, this movement is at the same time directed against the banker, the hidden enemy".

Between 1844 and January 1848 Marx visited England, and through Engels met and discussed with Chartist activists, including George Julian Harney. During the same period he also met and exchanged ideas with workers in Paris and in Brussels.

The Manifesto made several predictions about the likely course of events, many of which did not come true in the timescale it implies. Marx and Engels addressed this in their 1872 preface to a new German edition, saying that although "conditions may have changed in the twenty-five years since the Manifesto was written, yet the general principles expounded in the document are on the whole as correct to-day as ever". They did not spell out in this preface what they thought those general principles were, but the philosophical model sketched out above must surely have been one of them. □



We promised to be sisters to all

By Alexandra Hulme, former Girlguiding leader

Next year would mark my 10 years of service as a Brownie leader for Girlguiding UK. As I write this, my camp blanket lies on my bed littered with Guiding with Pride badges. I won't be receiving my next badge however, as I, like many others, have decided to leave Girlguiding in response to their newly introduced anti-trans policies.

Girlguiding UK announced in December last year a change in their policy which stated that only "biological females" may join. The new policy affects all members, young and leader, and those in what are termed "female only" roles. This means that the organisation will no longer accept membership for Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, rangers and leaders who are not cisgender women.

Then, by 6 September, trans girls and women within Girlguides will have to leave. Or, alternatively, those within "female only" positions will be re-allocated to a volunteering role that is open to all genders.

On 24 March Girlguiding UK posted on their website the following statement: "Trans girls who are already young members can stay until 6 September 2026." In the same statement the organisation describes itself as a

"youth organisation for girls and young women... exist(s) to empower girls and young women and help create a more equal world."

"We remain committed to standing up for all girls and women... supporting marginalised communities, including our LGBTQ+ members." Reading the new policy brought me so much heartache. I couldn't reconcile the amazing organisation that I had devoted nearly 20 years of my life to with this.

Outrage

I immediately took to social media to see how other members had reacted. Of course it was filled with outrage. I found an Instagram account from a recently set up group called Guiders Against Trans Exclusion who started protesting and sharing more information about the policy. They have over 6,000 followers and organise events across the country.

The policy change follows an April 2025 UK Supreme Court ruling that "clarified" the definition of "sex" under the Equality Act 2010 to mean biological sex. The new policy sees an overthrow of a 2017 Girlguides policy that transgender members were welcome in the organisation.

Groups like Sex Matters welcomed the move as a return to "single-sex provision," while Trans+ Solidarity Alliance and Mermaids described it as

"heartbreaking" and a failure to protect inclusive spaces. Some volunteers have launched petitions and formed groups like Guiders Against Trans Exclusion (GATE) to protest the change. Hundreds of leaders, such as myself, have resigned or are threatening to.

Across the country Girlguiding has over 80,000 volunteers and 300,000 members ranging from four years old to 18. Girlguiding UK have themselves introduced a taskforce to help explore ways trans women and girls can connect with the organisation outside of core membership. In recent weeks and months many protests have taken place, from Sheffield to Edinburgh, where guiders have gathered to express their discontent with the exclusion of trans members. Placards at these protests have had slogans such as "Solidarity With All My Sisters" "While Adults Debate Children Bleed" and "Make A Promise Keep a Promise".

It is heartening to see such a response from my fellow sisters. We made a promise when joining Girlguiding UK that we will be a sister to *all* Guides, and I think it should stay that way.

Girlguiding may use the UK Supreme Court ruling as a scapegoat and it may also say that it is willing to keep trans women and girls in contact with the organisation, but it is simply not enough.



This new policy comes in times of increased trans pushback, with policy and rhetoric becoming increasingly dangerous in society for our trans siblings.

The latest Home Office [statistics](#) show more than 21,000 police-recorded hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation and over 4,000 trans-related hate crimes in England and Wales between March 2024 and March 2025.

We should all stand together to make sure that everyone is held as an equal and can enjoy spaces to their full extent. Girlguiding was and should remain a space for all women and girls, whether they are cisgender or not. □

Debate

Don't forget the long-term background

By Dan Katz

Owen objects (*Solidarity* 763) to the editorial which I wrote for *Solidarity* 762, demanding that the characterisation of the Iranian regime ("brutal, misogynistic theocratic dictatorship") be matched by stronger denunciations of Trump and the Israeli government.

Trump showing "contempt" for US democratic norms and being "careless" with Iranian lives is not good enough, apparently, even with all the other words against Trump and Netanyahu in other articles in the paper.

Of course the US and Israel outgun Iran. That's true. On the other hand, the nature and political objectives of the Iranian regime are worse than those of the US and Israel.

Trump's immigration policy

is horrible. But Trump has not recently murdered 20,000 oppositionists in the US, which the Iranian state did over three days in January.

The Iranian state is an ultra-repressive fascistic state, in relation to its own citizens, in a way that Israel and the US are not in relation to their own citizens. I know about the repulsive policy of ICE and the discrimination faced by Palestinian Israelis, and I denounce them, but they are not the same.

The Israeli genocide in Gaza has been worse than the Iranian military action in support of Assad in Syria? Yes. But we also understand that the almost insane, utterly disproportionate IDF actions in Gaza were provoked by a pogrom launched by Hamas. Prior to the Hamas attacks Israeli pol-

icy was one of "containment" of a group that since its inception has worked for the destruction of Israel. No force in Syria had declared plans to wipe Iran off the map.

I'm against past Israeli policy and their current policy. I'm for a democratic peace, two states.

Reasonable

Nevertheless, even in Israel's horrible actions there is an element which is reasonable: the government wants to protect the existence of Israel and the welfare of (Jewish) Israeli people. Israel is militarily strong now, but Israeli Jews' thinking is still shaped, cannot but be shaped, by many wars, over decades, with forces based in the much larger countries which surround them.

If reminding ourselves of

that makes us mealy-mouthed about atrocities in Gaza, in Lebanon, or in the West Bank, that's wrong; if anger against those atrocities makes us forget the longer-term background, that's wrong too.

Iran currently has 400kg of nearly-bomb-grade, 60%-enriched uranium, which is now presumably buried under half a mountain. The Israeli government believes that makes it safer, for now at least. True as far as it goes, no?

A nuclear-armed Iran would pose a threat to the very existence of Israel. Israel is nuclear-armed, but it has never wished to wipe Iran off the map.

There is an element of self-defence in Israeli actions, alongside other elements which are overwhelming in this war and which the editorial

sharply denounced.

Owen wants Israel tagged with the label "sub-imperialist". It is. But that doesn't get us very far, because Iran is also "sub-imperialist" (Kurdistan, Balochistan, Syria, Iran-Iraq war, etc. etc.)

It remains a fact that Israel and Iran are "sub-imperialist" in radically different ways. The editorial tried to explain that calmly, without jargon, without being shrill or "shouting in writing", and under a headline "Iran: against US-Israeli bombing".

I'm aware that rational discussion on the British far left is often difficult to find and such nuances open me up to charges of "support for imperialism and genocide". But, Owen, we should not care too much about that. Our day will come. □

Easy victory eludes Trump

*No one likes us, I don't know why
We may not be perfect, but heaven
knows we try
And all around, even our best friends
put us down
Let's drop the big one and see what
happens
We give them money, but are they
grateful?
No, they're spiteful and they're hateful
They don't respect us, so let's surprise
them
Let's drop the big one and pulverise
them*

Political Science — Randy Newman

By Bas Hardy

Trump rushed into his latest war against Iran expecting an easy victory, but expecting the Iranian regime to collapse once a significant number of its leaders were assassinated proved unfounded. The collective brains of the Trump administration also failed to factor in the likelihood Iran would create an international economic crisis by bottling up the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump, the "America First" isolationist president has certainly succeeded in isolating the USA from all its erstwhile allies excepting Israel. Many got sucked into the Iraq quagmire in 2003 and aren't prepared to get trapped in another one. Now, over a month into this war, it seems that Iran "holds all the cards" with the economic threat posed to the world economy more than match-

ing the superior conventional weaponry of its attackers.

With no sign the Iranian dictatorship is ready to surrender, Trump has threatened a ground invasion. 5,000 marines and 2,000 paratroopers are already in the region with 10,000 additional soldiers readied for deployment. The suggestion is that any ground invasion of Iran would be "limited", possibly just involving the capture of Kharg island, through which 90% of Iran's oil is exported.

In June of last year Trump made ludicrous remarks that Iran was "totally defenceless", but it's certain that a lot of body bags would be heading stateside were there to be a ground invasion.

Infrastructure

Trump's other major threat is to destroy Iran's energy infrastructure by bombing its power plants. This brings to mind US Air Force General Curtis LeMay's infamous "Bomb them back to the Stone Age" remark made during the Vietnam war. A massive bombing campaign to destroy a nation's infrastructure is unlikely a war-winner now as it was then.

What though if Trump does the unthinkable? He has always resembled Archie Bunker, the bigoted bar-room bore in a well known seventies US TV sitcom. Boorish behaviour was on full display when Trump "joked" about Pearl Harbour sitting next to the Prime Minister of Japan.

Is it inconceivable that Trump might



go for the nuclear option if the regime in Tehran refuses to give in? With Trump's second term there are no guard rails. He surrounds himself with sycophants whose main qualification for their jobs is accepting he won the 2020 election. They are too scared even to tell him their correct shoe size, so don't expect much in the way of speaking truth to power.

Nuclear Option

To go for the nuclear option with respect to Iran means being aware of the consequences, but then Trump went into a war in the Middle East oblivious of the consequences that war held in terms of a seismic disruption of world oil supplies. The danger of his pudgy little finger hovering over the nuclear button was always a worry, and it is now particularly acute with nobody apparently around to tell him no.

In the MAGA base there have been some fractures, but so far 90% of MAGA

Republicans support the war. Those who don't seem to be devotees of anti-semitic conspiracy theories such as Joe Kent, who resigned as director of counterterrorism on the grounds that the war was started by the "Israel lobby". Neo-Nazi Nick Fuentes and Tucker Carlson echoed that line suggesting there is trouble yet to come in the "island of misfit toys" coalition that brought Trump to the White House.

For the majority of Americans, things are very different. Trump's approval ratings are way down to the extent that his own endorsed candidate lost a special election in Florida by 21 points in the district where his Mar-a-Lago golf club is. Loss of control of Congress beckons, unless there's some drastic interference with the electoral process which will notch the country towards a dictatorship.

Should the US incur major casualties if the war escalates there will be significant anti war protests. Any de-escalation is bound to lead to charges of Taco — Trump Always Chickens Out.

The much vaunted US constitution of checks and balances clearly isn't working with one individual in charge, clearly out of control and subject to his own whims and oblivious to logic. The American people deserve better and aren't stupid. They are more than capable of seeing of the Trump gang if the working class and community organisations take the lead. □

28 March is still the beginning

By Bernie Sanders

When historians write about this dangerous moment in American history, the people of Minnesota will deserve a special chapter for themselves.

In the face of unprecedented occupation of this city by ICE, Trump's domestic army. This community stood up and with extraordinary solidarity fought back and won.

Today we remember and honour two brave Americans, Renee Good and Alex Pretti, who lost their lives in the struggle. We promise their families and their friends that these two heroes will not have died in vain.

At a time of massive breakthroughs in technology, we have the opportunity to create a nation in which all people can enjoy a dignified standard of living, where the foundation of

our nation is built on love, compassion, and human solidarity.

But there is another vision out there as well. It says that we must give up on democracy, that we are too stupid and inept to govern ourselves, and that we must put more and more power into the hands of one man.

Struggle

It is a vision that says we should accept an economy in which a handful of oligarchs have unbelievable wealth while people struggle to put food on



the table.

It is a vision that says that the only thing that matters in life is the accumulation of money and power and that it is okay if we lie, cheat, and steal to achieve those goals.

It is a vision which says that we have unlimited amounts of money for bombs and guns and killing but never enough money to feed our children, provide affordable housing, or enable our parents to retire with dignity.

Never before in American history had we seen the super-rich expand their wealth so rapidly. Last year alone, after receiving the largest tax break in history, 938 billionaires in America became \$1.5 trillion richer. And our president, honest Donald Trump, became over a billion dollars richer himself.

We have got to stop the out-of-control militarism of the

Trump administration, whether it is here at home in cities like Minneapolis and St. Paul or abroad.

Lied

The American people were lied to about the war in Vietnam. We were lied to about the war in Iraq. And we are being lied to today about the war in Iran.

This war must end immediately.

Since this war began, 13 American soldiers have been killed and hundreds have been wounded. In Iran, nearly 2,000 civilians have been killed and many more wounded and schools have been bombed by American and Israeli missiles.

In Lebanon, more than a thousand people are dead and more than one million Lebanese people, 15% of their population have been displaced from their homes.

In Israel, 20 people have been killed and over 5,000 wounded. In the West Bank, Israeli vigilantes are burning down homes and killing Palestinians.

As a US senator, I want to just mention to you about what I intend to do about it. First, we have got to make sure that Congress does not send another \$200 billion dollars to fight this war.

Secondly, I will be forcing a vote in the Senate on legislation to block the sale of nearly a billion dollars in weapons to the Israeli military for bombs and bulldozers.

Today, March 28 2026, millions of Americans are out on the street demanding freedom, democracy, and justice. But we must make certain today is not the end of our struggle. It is the beginning. □

• Sanders was speaking on No Kings day in Minneapolis.



After local elections, school workers strike

By Colin Foster

On Tuesday 31 March, workers across France's public education sector are striking against job cuts.

Such battles are important to develop and redevelop a confidence in the French working class that labour-movement action can turn round the seemingly inexorable drift towards more social cuts – and towards a presidency of the Marine Le Pen's far-right Rassemblement National in 2027.

The French government has a huge debt overhang. Sebastien Lecornu, who on 10 October 2025 became the fifth prime minister to be appointed by president Emmanuel Macron since 2022, is holding onto office for now, and has bodged together a cuts budget.

The government is unpopular, but the labour movement is unable for now to defeat it, and the RN is establishing itself as an alternative. Opinion polling

for the 2027 presidential election shows the RN way ahead on the first round, and neck-and-neck with Edouard Philippe (a former Macron prime minister, but who has kept out of the line of fire by being a local mayor in recent years) on the second round.

The second round of the municipal elections on 22 March confirmed that picture. The Socialist Party won in Paris (despite no deal with La France Insoumise for the second round), Marseille, and Lyon. La France Insoumise, previously weak in municipal politics, won a few towns. But RN, also long weaker in municipal than national politics, made gains, and its ally Eric Ciotti took Nice.

Online at bit.ly/aps-2 we have comment from Arguments pour la Lutte Sociale. The Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste Révolutionnaires commented:

"The RN now runs 57 municipalities

with over 3,500 inhabitants, 48 more than in 2020. It has also increased its number of seats, with 3,121 councillors, compared to 827 previously. In total, the RN controls 63 town halls. And other far-right parties have secured 306 elected representatives. No major breakthroughs for the far right in the big cities, but they now have solid local networks.

"If the local councillors were close to our social camp and if our problems could be resolved at city level, we would know about it! No, neither here nor elsewhere will these people stand up to the interests of the bosses! From the PS [Socialist Party] to the RN [neo-fascist Rassemblement National], they all voted for the war budgets, lining up behind Macron, the stooge of French imperialist interests and, first and foremost, of its arms dealers. The Greens abstained, not because they opposed the increase in the defence budget, but because it is

better to fund it through tax rises. LFI [La France Insoumise] voted against it, but it was only to praise, through the voice of [its leader Jean-Luc] Mélenchon, the arms and death merchant Dassault. "I am a fan of the Rafale [fighter aircraft] in global aviation"; "I greatly admire the Dassault company, the work that has been done over all these years", he said, during a factory visit in 2025.

"Whether united or fragmented, the left that manages capital has done nothing but lead a large section of the working class and the youth to disillusionment, paving the way for a sharp rightward shift by the entire ruling class...

"The public education sector will be on strike across France on 31 March against the 3,200 job cuts planned for the start of the new school year. Everywhere, this perspective of undermining our rulers' policies of social destruction and of a war offensive is posed and must be encouraged and amplified". □

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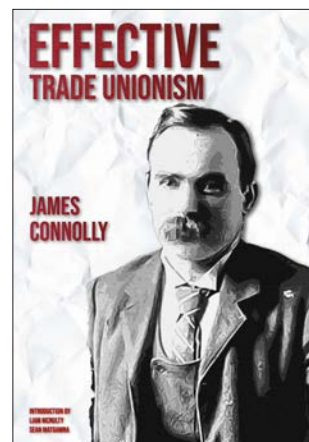
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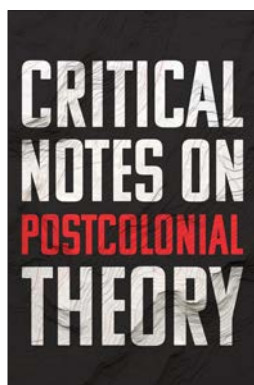
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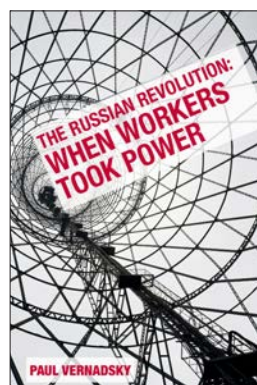
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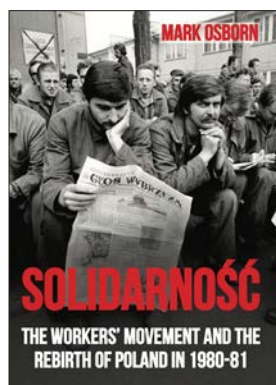
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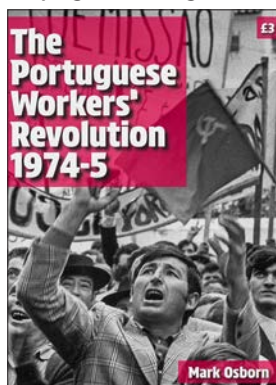
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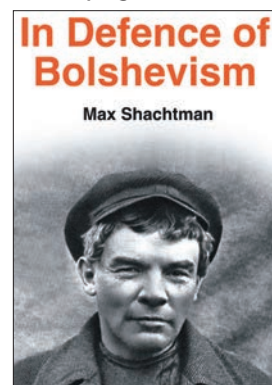
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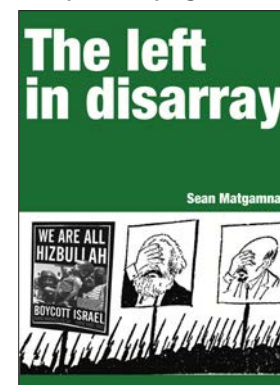
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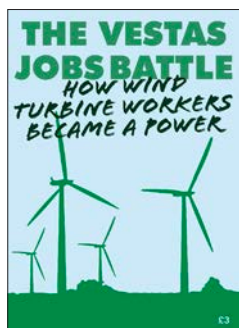
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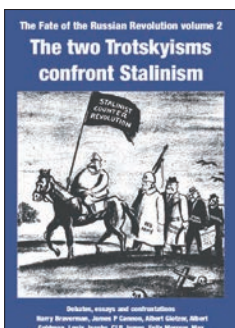
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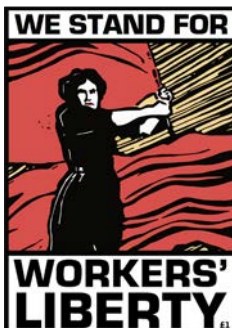
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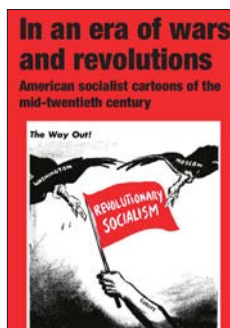
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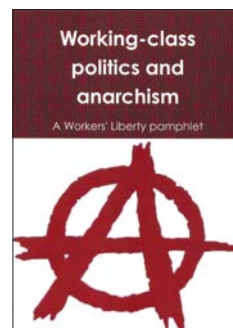
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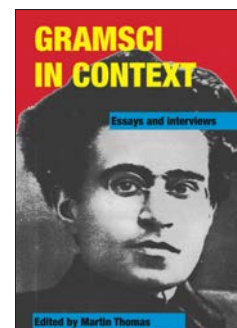
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Students mobilise against the “death spirals”

By Sam Myerson

As the second term of the university year ends, the Sheffield Hallam Anti Cuts (SHAC) group have stepped up their activity. The students have organised a demonstration pointing out the number of staff that have been made redundant by the university in cuts in the past few years, and also drawing attention to the current threats to jobs, conditions and courses.

SHAC plan a demonstration for 26 April in Hallam Square. 11am to 1pm. Check out their Instagram page for more info: bit.ly/shac-i.

The UCU branch at Sheffield Hallam has put together a [report](#) based on anonymised quotes from members about the impact of the cuts, current and historic. It makes for grim reading.

University bosses have opened a vol-

untary redundancy scheme seeking to cut 200 academic posts on top of the previous cut of 20% of academic posts. Some departments face having up to one in four staff, in higher grade positions, facing compulsory redundancies.

Previously Hallam bosses had sought to change the way that grading works at the university, looking to cull higher-grade eight staff, and have more and more teaching done by grades six and seven, with no prospect of moving on to research positions.

Pensions

Those attacks come on the back of the university's opening salvo, which was to signal their intent to transfer staff to a new third party employer, remove them from the Teachers' Pension Scheme to worse pension provision, and attack terms and conditions more broadly.

Sheffield Hallam is not alone. Across the country university bosses are looking at ways to cut costs, on the backs of staff, further and further. There is no new money coming from central government, who are currently closing routes for international students. The whole system is in tatters.

The national leadership of the union, with General Secretary Jo Grady, appear to be twiddling their thumbs while the sector is gutted.

At Hallam, and also at Nottingham, where cuts have also been coming thick and fast, students who are in the enrolment period now face stark choices. Courses that they were hoping to start in September may not even take place. At London Metropolitan University staff have just voted 90% in favour of industrial action, beating the anti-union laws' turnout threshold. That dispute is over

cuts to jobs, condition and courses which could see entire departments go.

At the University of Sheffield, staff have just voted for further industrial action, though turnout and the yes vote were both down on the last ballot. There could be industrial action over the exam and final coursework period.

The UCU branch voted to halt action under their last mandate after management rolled back a bit on compulsory redundancies.

Government

The government has had very little to say about the funding crisis. In response to the widespread discussion over student loans, Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson has said it is a “question of priorities”.

What other priorities does the education secretary have? A real-terms cut in the funding for free school meals for FE students? Defending disappearing government phones? Racist attacks on international students?

Students around the country where cuts are taking place are fighting back, organising campaigns and discussing ideas on what to do next. It is clear that there is a need for a “rank and file” approach to student organising on campus.

Student unions are doing little to fight back, and the Nation Union of Students is almost silent on these questions. Campaigns need to put pressure on university bosses, and also on student “leaders” to step up and fight, to turn student unions into organising centres and build connected campaigns that can in turn put pressure on the government. □

Rally backs Northumbria UCU

By a Northumbria student

Attacks on pay and pension at Northumbria University persist. 25 March saw the biggest turn out so far in the fight back, as the University and College Union (UCU) had its national demonstration in Newcastle.

Around 250 people took to the streets. Speeches came from the General Secretary of the UCU, Jo Grady, representatives from Northumbria UCU branch, and other UCU branches and unions. Jo Grady sent a message to the management at Northumbria that the Northumbria UCU branch has the full support of the national UCU: this

attack will be seen as an attack on all higher education institutions.

There have been 12 days of strikes so far and five more strike days are planned in April.

Across the country we are seeing the impact of the decisions of Northumbria University bosses. Other universities like Southampton Solent, Sheffield Hallam, Staffordshire and London South Bank have been emboldened to downgrade staff pension schemes.

Workers' Liberty in Newcastle stand in solidarity with Northumbria University's staff. Comrades have rallied students in support and maintained a consistent dialogue with the UCU about



the best way to show solidarity. Students must stand with staff. The stakes are high. The quality of our education is on the line. □

Tube

Are the bosses stringing us along?

From Tubeworker

Rail union RMT has suspended strikes planned for March, after London Underground (LUL) agreed to further talks.

The decision, taken by the union's National Executive Committee, followed a meeting of driver reps from depots across the network. Those who supported the decision to suspend the action argued that management's offer of further talks represented a qualitative shift in the company's position. Whereas previously they had claimed their “four-day

week” scheme was non-negotiable, they're now saying they will negotiate after all.

A minority of reps disagreed, arguing that strikes should be suspended only when we've won concrete concessions, and not simply for the promise of more talks. LUL previously agreed to suspend implementation of the scheme in November, while a round of dispute-resolution talks were held. RMT held off from calling strikes at that time in order to allow the talks to take place. But LUL eventually refused to make any changes.

The company is under more

pressure now, with strikes in April and May, and additional dates announced in June, looming. But the concern is that LUL can string out talks for weeks, meanwhile continuing to work on implementation in the background. Once a strike is demobilised, it's harder to build back up for action. It feels a little too much like the “Duke of York” strategy that has dogged RMT disputes for decades.

Repeat

Here's an article from *Tubeworker* from over 20 years ago: “The members voted 80%

yes to strike action. [Reps] voted unanimously to put the first strike date on 10 June. The mandate could not have been clearer. And yet the RMT leadership has reneged on that for no good reason: [the strike] was called off for nothing more than further talks [...] We are sick and tired of years-long negotiations where management graciously acknowledge our aspirations but deliver nothing.

“[...] Bob Crow said: ‘LUL has indicated that it is now prepared to negotiate seriously on all of our aspirations on pay and conditions’.

“But why trust LUL? For

years, they have said that they are ‘negotiating seriously’, but have left issues outstanding for years and years!”

It sounds depressingly familiar. But we are where we are. The key thing now is to ensure that upcoming negotiations are as transparent as possible. Reps and members need comprehensive information about what is being discussed in the talks, so we can make properly informed decisions about whether LUL is negotiating seriously and likely to make concessions, or just stringing us along. □



What we stand for

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

Capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, blighting of lives by overwork; imperialism, environmental destruction and much else.

The working class must unite to struggle against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, in the workplace and wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses, to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement
- A workers' charter of trade union rights – to organise, strike, picket effectively, and take solidarity action
- Taxing the rich to fund good public services, homes, education and jobs for all
- Workers' control of major industries and finance for a rapid transition to a Red society
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. Reproductive freedoms and free abortion on demand.
- Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people
- Black and white workers' unity against racism
- Open borders
- Global solidarity against global capital – workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small
- Maximum left unity in action, and full openness in debate

If you agree with us, take copies of *Solidarity* to sell – and join us! □

• workersliberty.org/join-awl

"Who are these people?"

By David Axon

The strike action by the NASUWT teachers' union at St Cuthbert's High School in Rochdale, reported in *Solidarity* 762, has been suspended, with results of a ballot for action in the same school due before Easter.

The Nasuwt action was over student behaviour, rooted in the decline of the school since being forced by the Diocese of Liverpool to join the St Theresa's multi-academy trust (MAT). The (highly paid) management of the MAT have removed posts from the school and left vacant posts unfilled, at the same time as imposing cuts on provision central to good relationships in the school.

The Nasuwt action has forced the MAT to address – at least in part – the behaviour issues that are one symptom of the problems at the school: senior leaders from other schools in the MAT were drafted in to fill some of the gaps previously created by the MAT. This is only a temporary measure though, and does nothing to help staff or students rebuild relationships. Staff were not notified of their arrival in the school, even having to ask the (temporary) headteacher, "Who are these people, and why are they being so arsey?"

The NEU action is over further cuts

planned by the trust in a "restructure". In an indicative ballot turnout approaching 90%, 100% of those voting backed a call for strikes. The Nasuwt action was very focused on children's "behaviour", publicising individual incidents in the local media and with strikers being quoted in those same media as blaming children and their parents. The real blame lies with St Theresa's MAT and the Salford Diocese, and this must be made clear in the action.

Whilst the additional redundancies

threatened in the restructure are as yet unknown, some staff are, understandably, already leaving the school. Given the MAT's record of leaving posts unfilled, NEU members and others are concerned at the impact this will have. □

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Kino Eye

Working class culture and World War 1

By John Cunningham

I remember once sitting outside The Castle pub in Bolsterstone, near to Stocksbridge, and listening to the thundering voices of the Bolsterstone male voice choir practising in the upstairs room. It is a vivid memory of a part of the culture in which I grew up, although at the time I was not keen on choirs, male or otherwise. In my teens and early twenties my musical preferences came from across the Atlantic.

It was a pleasure therefore to be reminded of the musical tradition of choirs with *The Choral*, released last year, directed by Nicholas Hytner with a screenplay by Alan Bennett. The choral society in the fictional mill

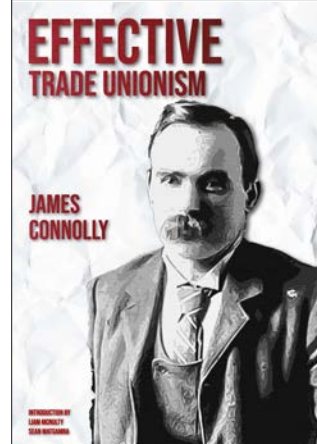


town of Ramsden in West Yorkshire is struggling. The First World War is taking its toll and the choir's ranks are being depleted as the men go off to war.

A new choir master, Henry Guthrie (Ralph Fiennes), is hired but his love of Ger-

man music and the fact that he once lived in Germany does not go down well with the patriotic townspeople. As virtually all the major composers are German, it is decided to perform *The Dream of Gerontius* by the very British Edward Elgar. The rehearsals are beset by problems, not least by the intervention of Elgar himself, who objects to the changes made by Guthrie.

Nevertheless, the performance eventually goes ahead and is a triumph. The film ends as more Ramsden recruits, many of them from the choir, go off to fight, cheerily waving goodbye from their departing train. We know few of them will return. □



Aiming to replace capitalism with socialism, James Connolly's organising and ideas evolved considerably. One idea he clung to was industrial unionism, workers' solidarity across grades and trades and sympathetic strikes. 64 pages £5 □

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Movement in Birmingham bins dispute

By Jim Denham

Birmingham City Council has announced it wants a meeting with Unite the Union about the long-running bins dispute "as soon as possible".

The all-out-strike over pay cuts of up to £8,000 and other issues began in March 2025. The Labour council broke off negotiations in July, saying at the time that it had "reached the absolute limit of what we can offer" after the government-appointed commissioners vetoed a settlement offer that Unite's Sharon Graham said she'd have been willing to recommend to members.

The all-out action began after the council's decision to remove Waste Recycling and Collection Officer (WRCO) roles.

The union claimed the roles were important for safety and that about 170 affected workers faced losing up to £8,000 a year because of the decision. The dispute later spread to bin lorry drivers, with Unite saying their pay could fall from £40,000 to £32,000.

Now council leader John Cotton has said he wants an urgent meeting with the union.

But despite reaching out for talks, Cotton has said Unite has to be "realistic" and continued to stress that Unite and the strikers must "acknowledge the constraints that the council must work within."

In a video posted to social media on Thursday 19 March, Cotton said: "We have reached out to Unite to end this stalemate. The people of Birmingham want this resolved and the workers want to go back to work. So I want to get around the table with Unite as soon as possible".

There can be no doubt that Cotton's offer of renewed negotiations is in large part because of the likelihood of Labour being decimated in the May local elections.

It is clearly also a testament to the determination and solidarity shown by



the strikers. But little thanks are due to the Unite leadership, nationally or locally, which has shown little strategy for achieving victory, or even an acceptable compromise, other than to keep on keeping on.

Instead of using Unite's considerable influence within the Labour Party positively, Unite general secretary Sharon

Graham has been dropping hints of disaffiliation, with a proposed ballot of members on breaking with Labour, and has announced that Unite's levy to the Party will be reduced by 40 percent. Little has been done to draw in other unions to action putting more pressure on the council.

Unite national lead officer Onay Kasab has responded: "A ballpark deal to end the dispute was already agreed with Joanne Roney at Acas last May, but was then blocked by commissioners.

Unite has always stood ready to resume those talks. If the council are now ready to do that, we welcome it and will get a date arranged as soon as possible."

It is essential that the strikers themselves have the final say, at a mass meeting, on any offer that emerges from the talks. □

Hope in museum strike

By Ken Worthington

The long-running dispute at the National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield has had some positive developments for the workers on strike over the last week. Pay talks between the strikers' union, Unison, and museum took place on 24 March. There has been

no comprehensive update of the contents of the talks or any outcomes, but Unison has released a statement saying that positive talks took place and it is hopeful of finding a resolution at planned future talks.

The second positive development relates to a statement from the charities commission which states that they have

now commissioned a full regulatory investigation into the museum. Since the beginning of the strike there have been calls from across the labour movement including from Jon Trickett MP, Wakefield Council Labour group and the striking workers themselves, for an investigation to be launched into mismanagement at the mu-

seum over the way the bosses have handled the strike and spent vast amounts of money to try to break it.

Concerns

Solidarity has previously reported that in January 2026 the charity commission was assessing governance concerns at the museum. The

commissions statement said they were doing this "to assess wider information about the charity's governance and management, and determine any next steps". This latest development clearly demonstrates that the charity commission believes that there may be evidence of wrongdoing at the museum. □

NEU: one battle after another

By David Pendleton

The National Education Union (NEU) has its Annual Conference in Brighton from 30 March to 2 April. The union faces major challenges.

Our members work in a severely underfunded service for pay which still lags substantially behind what they earned ten years ago. Educators and the diverse communities we serve face threats from the far right and the prospect of a Reform government turning the clock back to the 1950s. And we continue organising and educating in a fragmented, chaotic school system which the government plans to fragment further.

Confronting the pay and funding crisis will depend on the result of our indicative ballots. Support staff and teachers will support the call to action, and branch officers and reps are working hard to reach the turnout levels set by anti-union laws. The Labour government is abolishing the turnout thresh-

olds from September, but too late for this ballot.

If enough members support action, the union must not squander that mandate in token strikes. We need a coherent plan of action to put serious pressure on the government on a short time-frame, which links education staff with parents, students and communities by focusing on the school funding crisis.

Beat

To beat the far right, we have to build unity across all the groups threatened by it. Conference can pass a strong, comprehensive motion on this. However, one amendment proposes to remove the commitment to "organise a national demonstration with others in solidarity with migrant workers and demand the government tax the rich, scrap anti-union laws, end poverty and create good jobs, homes, services and social security for all". Our movement is good at declaring what we're against

but less good at articulating what we positively demand. Removing this positive proposal would take us back into that failed, negative space.

Our fragmented school system faces a new danger which has gone unnoticed by many. Our response to the recent Education White Paper has been about SEND, with less attention given to its proposal to have all schools move into MATs. When Michael Gove proposed this in 2015, we led one of our most effective campaigns, with other unions and local councillors, and forced the Tory government to abandon the plan. We should respond to Labour's plan in the same way.

Educators' Fightback will have daily bulletins and will hold our fringe meeting with speakers from the anti-regime and anti-war movement in Iran on Wednesday 1 April. The NEU Ukraine Solidarity Network has its fringe on Tuesday 2nd. □

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Labour should not copy Danish Social Democrats (except on wealth tax)

By Rhodri Evans

The far-right Danish People's Party did well in Denmark's general election on 24 May. It won 9.1% of the vote and 16 seats, a big advance on 2022, though still behind its 21% in 2015.

The Social Democrats, long Denmark's major party (it got 42% of the vote under Denmark's strict-proportional-representation system in 1960 and 1964) came out as the biggest party, despite poor poll ratings at the start of 2026.

Mette Frederiksen has been prime minister since 2019 and won re-election in 2022 from wide approval of her handling of the Covid pandemic. This time her stand against Trump's threats to Greenland, and maybe also her new promise of a wealth tax, brought some recovery. But the Social Democrats' vote share was the lowest since 1903.

That tells us, first, that a wealth tax is no fantasy, but something possible even for a right-wing Social Democrat leader; secondly, that it is only a small step in recouping for the working class the loot extracted from us by the rich; and third, that anti-immigrant policies do not work even as a cynical electoral gambit to scoop the far right.

Shabana Mahmood's plans in Britain are modelled on Frederiksen's policies, but in Denmark they have not stopped the rise of the far right.

With proportional representation, Denmark almost always has coalition governments. Most parties are in either the "red bloc" led by the Social Democrats or the "blue bloc" led by Venstre (the main conservative party, whose name confusingly translates to English as "Left"). Often governments are of either the "red" or the "blue" bloc, with some parties in the bloc taking government positions and others giving external support. Since 2022 Frederiksen had chosen to run a "centre coalition" rather than "red bloc" government.

The Red-Green Alliance, a merger of the Mandelate SAP with the old Communist Party, Maoists,



and others, was in "external support" to Frederiksen's government 2019-22, but not since 2022. It did relatively well, with 6.3%, still below its high of 7.8% in 2015.

The second party in the "red bloc" was the Green Left, Danish component of the European Green Party (though formally named Socialist People's Party and originating as a splinter from the Communist Party). They made modest gains.

The Moderates party, founded in 2022 and standing outside both "red" and "blue" blocs, holds the balance of power in the new Parliament, and will be the focus of coalition-making.

The rise of the far right is far from automatic and inexorable. But all the evidence is that continuation of attempts at middle-of-the-road government will not stem it. And dismissing the far right as no worse than the "red bloc" won't, either. □

Police restart arrests on anti-ban protests

By Chris Reynolds

The government's appeal against the High Court ruling on 13 February that its ban on Palestine Action as "terrorist" is unlawful is likely to be heard on 28 and 29 April.

On 28 March the Metropolitan Police reversed their previous policy, since the High Court judgement, that they would cease arrests pending the appeal. 16 peaceful protesters outside New

Scotland Yard with placards were arrested by the Metropolitan Police.

Trials are still suspended until 30 July. Some 2,700 people have been arrested on the repeated peaceful anti-ban protests, simply for holding placards saying "I support Palestine action".

The Defend Our Juries group is organising another mass-defiance event on Saturday 11 April at Trafalgar Square. □



US left pushing for strike on May Day

By Harold Storey

The No Kings protests on 28 March were maybe the largest in American history. It is estimated that over eight million people took part across America, 200,000 in Minneapolis, 350,000 in New York.

Trade unions, including the AFL-CIO union confederation and the SEIU, sponsored, had a presence on the protests, and provided some headline speakers.

The unions however were certainly not the leading force behind the protests. The organised left and far left in America seems to be focusing more on action planned for 1 May (a weekday).

The 15 February workers' assembly in Minneapolis for instance, organised by left wing groups and trade unions, saw over 300 workers attend,

vote for a "no work, no school, no shopping" day, and call for a national day of strikes on May Day. Another assembly will be held in Madison, Wisconsin, on 4 April, organised by the Democratic Socialists of America and Socialist Alternative USA; it is currently looking for union endorsements.

May Day Strong is also organising for a "no work, no school, no shopping" day on 1 May, and are hosting a national online organising meeting on 9 April.

If 1 May is to be a significant day of protest, the American left and trade unions must effectively use the aftermath of No Kings to build for and beyond it. □

• More on the USA: page 19

Support the doctors!

By Gerry Bates

Doctors have responded to Keir Starmer's threat to scrap promised new specialist training places for new doctors by announcing two new ballots for industrial action.

Consultants and SAS (Specialty, Associate Specialist, and Specialist) doctors will each start ballots on 11 May.

Both say that the 3.5% pay "uplift" offered this

year is not enough, after years of relative pay decline.

Resident doctors are already due to strike for a better pay deal from 7 to 13 April. The additional training places had been touted by health minister Wes Streeting as a way to fob off their pay demands.

In 2025 there were 30,000 applicants for about 10,000 places in specialist-training jobs. □

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SOLIDARITY

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Pages 4-5